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Groups of countries in special situations: follow-up to the second United Nations Conference on landlocked developing countries

Implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014–2024

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is submitted pursuant to resolution 72/232, in which the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit at its seventy-third session a progress report on the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014–2024. The report reviews the progress in the implementation of the priorities of the Vienna Programme of Action, including activities by Member States and relevant organizations of the United Nations system and other organizations in response to the Programme. The report identifies the major challenges encountered and suggests recommendations to accelerate the implementation of the Programme. The report stresses that the landlocked developing countries require continued and enhanced investment and technical assistance to further advance implementation of the priorities of the Programme, in particular with regard to infrastructure development, trade facilitation, structural transformation and regional integration. That will also help contribute to those countries' efforts towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. The report also calls for greater cooperation between landlocked developing countries and transit countries and deepened regional integration to improve the trade potential of landlocked developing countries.

In addition, the report provides an update on the progress made in the preparatory process for the comprehensive midterm review of the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action, to be held no later than December 2019, as called for in resolution 72/232. The international community is invited to ensure its active support and participation in the preparatory process and the midterm review itself.

The report also takes note of the inauguration of the International Think Tank for Landlocked Developing Countries, the first intergovernmental body of the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries.

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I. Introduction

1. Landlocked developing countries are confronted with structural challenges pertaining to their geographical disadvantages, which result in disproportionally high transport and trade costs that hinder their competitiveness, job creation, integration into regional and world markets, economic growth and overall sustainable development.

2. The Vienna Programme of Action for Landlocked Developing Countries for the Decade 2014–2024 reflects the commitment of the international community to address the challenges faced by landlocked developing countries in a more coherent manner and to contribute to an enhanced rate of sustainable and inclusive growth, which can in turn contribute to the eradication of poverty. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development recognizes the importance of addressing the special needs of landlocked developing countries.

3. The present report is the fourth report on progress in the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action. It highlights the role of United Nations entities in following up on the Programme of Action and proposes recommendations to accelerate its implementation. An annex containing statistical tables is attached.

II. Overview of recent socioeconomic developments and progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals in landlocked developing countries

4. Real growth in gross domestic product (GDP) for landlocked developing countries continued to decline, falling to 2.79 per cent in 2016, its lowest level since 1998. Continued efforts are needed to reverse that downward trend and to eradicate extreme poverty by 2030 in those countries. The scorecard of progress towards meeting the targets of the Sustainable Development Goals presents a mixed picture. For Goal 1, the proportion of those countries' total population living below the international poverty line of $1.90 per day declined to 31 per cent in 2013, but was still higher than the world average, which stood at 10.9 per cent. The percentage of the employed population below the poverty line in landlocked developing countries declined, from 26.8 per cent in 2015 to 25.5 per cent in 2017.

5. With regard to Goal 2, despite an earlier decline, the prevalence of undernourishment in landlocked developing countries increased to a projected 23.2 per cent during the period 2014–2016, compared with 22.9 per cent during the period 2009–2011. In 2015, the prevalence of moderate or severe food insecurity was 51.6 per cent of the adult population, compared with a global average of 23.9 per cent. Official flows to the agriculture sectors in landlocked developing countries in 2016 amounted to $2.8 billion, equivalent to 8.4 per cent of the total official flows to those countries, up from 7.7 per cent in 2015.

6. For Goal 3, mortality rates of children under the age of 5 in landlocked developing countries declined, from 65.9 per 1,000 live births in 2015 to 63.3 in 2016. Similarly, neonatal mortality declined from 26.3 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2015 to 25.6 in 2016. The HIV incidence rate continued to decline, from 0.76 new cases per 1,000 uninfected people in 2015 to 0.71 in 2016. Further progress was also achieved from 2015 to 2016 with regard to indicators for tuberculosis, neglected tropical diseases, non-communicable diseases and suicide.

7. Regarding Goals 4 and 5, continued overall improvement in school enrolment indicators was registered through 2015 and 2016, although gender disparities persist. Progress continues to be made on indicators related to gender equality and the

empowerment of women and girls, including a decline in the percentages of women aged 20 to 24 reporting that they had been married by the age of 15 or by the age of 18. In 2018, 25 per cent of seats in national parliaments and local governing bodies in landlocked developing countries were held by women, exceeding the global average of 23.4 per cent.

8. With regard to Goal 6, despite steady improvements over the past years, the average proportion of the population in landlocked developing countries with access to improved drinking water sources and sanitation facilities remains very low, and well below world averages, especially in rural areas.

9. On Goal 7, the percentage of the population with access to electricity rose by 7 per cent to 51.8 per cent from 2015 to 2016. Energy intensity, measured in terms of primary energy and GDP, improved from 2014 to 2015.

10. Regarding Goal 8, in 2016, the annual growth rate of real GDP per capita of landlocked developing countries stood at 0.4 per cent, its lowest level in over a decade, down from 1.0 per cent in 2015. Unemployment remained at 5.5 per cent during 2015–2017; however, unemployment disproportionately affected women and youth.

11. For Goal 9, data show continued growth in air passenger and freight transport, with the latter increasing by 3 per cent in 2016. Manufacturing value added has remained broadly constant over the past three years both as a share of total GDP as well as per capita.

12. With regard to Goals 11 and 12, the mean level of fine particulate matter in cities in 2014 was 44 per cent compared with a world average of 45 per cent. There was an upward trend in material consumption in absolute terms from 2015 to 2017, as well as in the material footprint per capita.

13. Concerning Goal 13 on climate change, the high vulnerability of landlocked developing countries to the negative impacts of climate change, especially drought, desertification, land degradation and the melting of glaciers, is of serious concern, and increased resources and support are needed to implement national adaptation plans. For Goal 15, land covered by forests has declined steadily from 16.3 per cent in 2010 to 15.8 per cent in 2015, while total official development assistance (ODA) for conservation, biodiversity and ecosystems has declined from 2010 to 2016.

14. With regard to Goal 14, some progress has been made in raising awareness on the part of landlocked developing countries regarding their right to utilize the oceans, seas and marine resources, and to carry out activities in the international seabed area, but greater support and resources are needed to improve their participation and access.

15. Finally, on Goals 10 and 17, total flows for development to landlocked developing countries, including ODA, other official flows and private flows, declined from $38.1 billion in 2015 to $34.6 billion in 2016. Debt servicing as a percentage of exports rose from 3.8 in 2015 to 4.9 in 2016.

III. Status of implementation of the priorities of the Vienna Programme of Action

Priority 1: fundamental transit policy issues

16. The Vienna Programme of Action stresses the necessity of a strong and supportive legal framework that promotes the harmonization, simplification and standardization of rules and documentation, including the full and effective implementation of relevant international conventions on transport and transit. The

current status of ratification of some key international legal instruments by landlocked developing countries and transit countries is presented in table 1.

17. Four landlocked developing countries — the Plurinational State of Bolivia, the Central African Republic, Malawi and Uganda — have ratified the World Trade Organization (WTO) Trade Facilitation Agreement since August 2017. Recent ratifications of the Customs Convention on the International Transport of Goods under Cover of TIR Carnets include China in January 2017 and India in June 2017.

Table 1
Status of ratification of key international conventions to promote trade and transport facilitation as of July 2018

Convention	*Landlocked developing countries*	*Transit countries*	*World total*
World Trade Organization Trade Facilitation Agreement (2013)	22	25	137
Revised Kyoto Convention (2006)	19	23	123
Customs Convention on the International Transport of Goods under Cover of TIR Carnets (1975)	11	7	73
International Convention on the Harmonization of Frontier Controls of Goods (1982)	12	2	58

Source: Office of Legal Affairs of the Secretariat, Economic Commission for Europe, World Customs Organization and World Trade Organization.

18. In July 2017, the World Customs Organization launched transit guidelines to assist its member States on how to apply the standards set in international conventions to facilitate faster customs and border procedures. The Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States and other international organizations provided substantive contributions to the development of the transit guidelines.

19. In June 2018, Mongolia signed an agreement on rail freight transit terms with the Russian Federation. Under the agreement, Mongolia will enjoy tariff discounts on the transit transport of its export goods through the Russian Federation for 25 years.

20. In Africa, the South African Development Community (SADC), in collaboration with the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa and the East African Community, launched the Tripartite Transport and Transit Facilitation Programme in October 2017. The project, funded by the European Union, aims to facilitate the development of a more competitive, integrated and liberalized regional road transport market in the East and Southern Africa region. Its purpose is to develop and implement harmonized road transport policies, laws, regulations and standards for efficient cross-border road transport and transit networks, transport and logistics services, systems and procedures.

21. A document establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area was signed in March 2018, creating a single continental market for goods and services as well as a customs union to enable the free movement of capital and business travellers.

22. In Latin America, the Plurinational State of Bolivia and Paraguay signed a memorandum of understanding in 2017 for a rail project that will connect the two countries. The railway segment will interface with the bioceanic railway corridor that will connect the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans by way of a 3,700 km line starting from the port of Santos, Brazil, passing through the Plurinational State of Bolivia, and ending in Ilo, Peru.

Priority 2: infrastructure development and maintenance

23. Continued efforts are under way to expand and upgrade road and rail transport infrastructure in all regions that have landlocked developing countries. Despite improvements, poor quality and deficiencies in the quantity of physical infrastructure are still major obstacles to developing viable and predictable transit transport systems in those countries.

24. Current data on road indicators for landlocked developing countries are not available. Using the most recent data available, ranging from 2009 to 2015, the Office of High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States calculated the road density in paved road network length (km) per unit of land area (km^2) in order to quantify transport infrastructure. Landlocked developing countries lag behind transit countries and the world in terms of both paved roads and railway density (see table 2). Landlocked developing countries contain only 12 per cent of the world's paved roads and just over one third of the world's railways. Those averages conceal very large differences between the regional averages, as landlocked developing countries in Eastern Europe and Central Asia have the highest road and railway densities. The largest deficiencies for both road and rail are for landlocked developing countries in East Asia and in West and Central Africa. Both road and railway development in landlocked developing countries need to be further accelerated in order to improve the trade potential of the such countries.

Table 2
Paved road and railway density of landlocked developing countries and transit countries

Category	*Paved road density (km per 1,000 km^2)*	*Rail density (km per 1,000 km^2)*
Landlocked developing countries	19.1	3.6
Transit countries	191.4	8.6
Global	151.0	9.5

Source: Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, 2018.

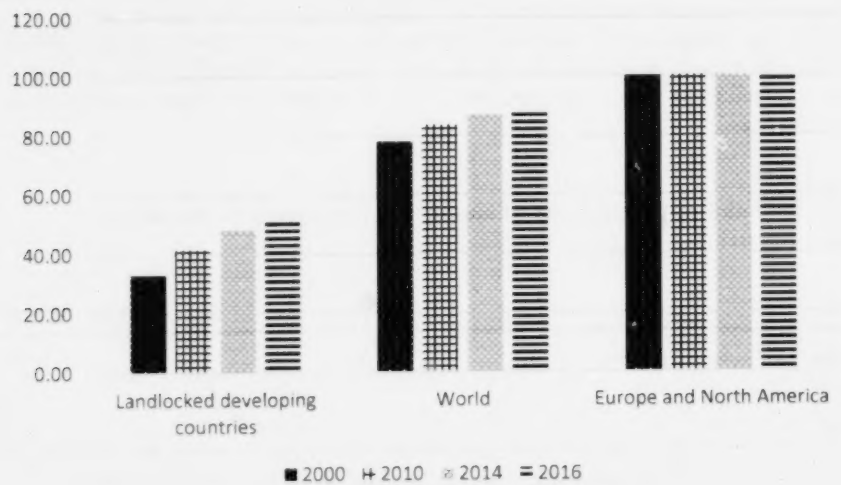
25. The number of registered air carrier departures worldwide increased in landlocked developing countries by 7 per cent to 413,833 in 2016. The global share of landlocked developing countries in freight transport by air was 1.28 per cent in 2016. Air transport is particularly important because it provides those who live in landlocked developing countries with direct access to international markets without the need to pass through transit countries. In January 2018, the African Union launched the Single African Air Transport Market, which aims to increase the continent's global share of the aviation industry. It provides for the full liberalization of intra-African air transport services in terms of market access and the free exercise of the first five freedoms of the air for scheduled and freight air services by eligible airlines. It removes restrictions on ownership and provides for the full liberalization of frequencies, tariffs and capacity.

26. Inland waterways are particularly used by landlocked developing countries in Latin America, South-East Asia and Central Africa. The major challenges of inland waterways include the reduction in water level at low periods, silting and other physical constraints, as well as issues related to their operation, management and regulation. To realize its potential, and to safeguard navigational safety and

environmental protection, transit trade involving the use of inland water transport requires improvements in infrastructure.

27. Regarding energy infrastructure, the average proportion of people with access to electricity in landlocked developing countries increased from 48.2 per cent in 2015 to 51.8 per cent in 2016, as shown in figure I; however, landlocked developing countries still lagged behind the world average of 87 per cent in 2016. Although landlocked developing countries experienced a 40 per cent increase in electricity in rural areas from 2014 to 2016, the rural-urban gap is still significant, as 83.5 per cent of the population in urban areas have access compared with 40.5 per cent in rural areas. Furthermore, at least two thirds of the population of landlocked developing countries relies on the traditional use of biomass for cooking, underscoring the urgent need for improved access to clean and modern cooking energy.

Figure I
Proportion of population with access to electricity
(Percentage)



Source: Supplementary information to E/2018/64.

28. With regard to information and communications technology (ICT), landlocked developing countries have experienced continued growth in mobile cellular subscriptions, increasing from 71.9 per 100 people in 2015 to 73.5 in 2016. However, landlocked developing countries lag significantly behind the world average for fourth generation (4G) network coverage. The average number of Internet users increased from 20.5 per 100 people in 2015 to 22.9 in 2016; however, as a group, landlocked developing countries lag behind other groups of countries. Landlocked developing countries continue to face high costs for broadband and more efforts are required to lower prices.

29. Unaffordable ICT connectivity hampers opportunities to leverage e-commerce, smart transportation systems and emerging technologies for sustainable development.

30. The investment needs for infrastructure development in the transport, energy and ICT sectors are great. A recent study conducted by the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States calculated investment estimates needed for the transport sectors of landlocked developing countries and found that for those countries to reach the global average of road and rail network densities, they would

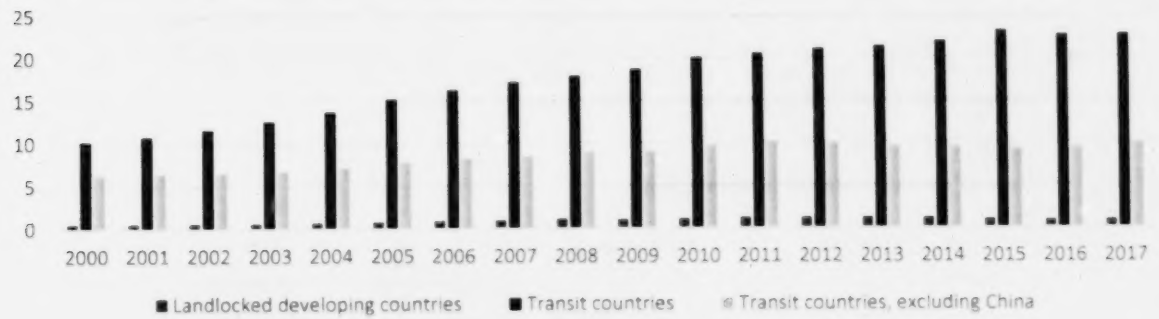
need to construct almost 200,000 km of paved roads and another 46,000 km of railways at a cost of about $0.51 trillion. Closing that gap in landlocked developing countries will require not only enhanced resources from the public sector, private sector and international development partners and the exploration of new sources of financing, but also efforts to make better use of existing resources.

Priority 3: international trade and trade facilitation

31. The 32 landlocked developing countries account for less than 1 per cent of global merchandise trade. Their participation in international trade, measured as the share of their merchandise exports in global exports, reached a peak of 1.22 per cent in 2012 and has since declined to an estimated 0.91 per cent in 2017. Figure II shows that trend as compared with a group of 34 transit countries that includes China and India.

32. A closer look at the disaggregated data at the country level shows that only four landlocked developing countries account for nearly 50 per cent of the group's total merchandise exports. The majority of the landlocked developing countries (21) accounted for no more than 2 per cent each, which demonstrates the degree of marginalization experienced by landlocked developing countries in global trade.

Figure II
Share of merchandise exports in global trade
(Percentage)



Source: UNCTADstat.

33. The rapid growth in e-commerce offers economy-wide benefits for landlocked developing countries aiming to integrate into global trade by providing opportunities for new markets and connections to international supply chains. The participation of landlock developing countries in e-commerce is still marginal owing to many factors, such as inadequate information and communications technology infrastructure, underdeveloped financial systems, weak legal and regulatory frameworks and low levels of ICT literacy. To utilize the opportunities provided by e-commerce, landlocked developing countries would require, among other things, capacity-building, reduction of the digital divide and improvement in trade facilitation.

34. One of the key challenges affecting the integration of the landlocked developing countries into global trade is the high trade costs resulting from long distances to ports, isolation from the international markets and cumbersome border procedures, among other things. The WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement sets out an important innovative method for creating an international framework to reduce delays at borders and reduce trade costs, which are among the biggest challenges faced by landlocked developing countries.

35. Various economic studies demonstrate that the Trade Facilitation Agreement will reduce trade costs. A report of the Organization for Economic Development (OECD) on trade facilitation indicators published in 2015 [1] indicated that the implementation of the Trade Facilitation Agreement could reduce worldwide trade costs by between 12.5 and 17.5 per cent. It is also estimated that developing countries would receive two thirds of the $1 trillion in gains from the trade expansion resulting from the Agreement. In addition, it is expected that the Agreement would likely reduce the time needed to import goods by more than a day and a half and to export goods by almost two days, representing a reduction in time of 47 per cent for imports and 91 per cent for exports over the current average.

36. As of July 2018, 22 of the 26 landlocked developing countries that are members of WTO had ratified the Trade Facilitation Agreement. The high level of ratification of the Agreement by those countries demonstrates the importance and the commitment they attach to the Agreement. The Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States contributed to raising the awareness of Member States regarding the potential benefits and implications of ratifying the Agreement and other conventions related to transit transport and trade facilitation for landlocked developing countries.

37. As of the end of July 2018, 24 landlocked developing countries had submitted their category A measures.[2] While some of those countries have made good progress in the implementation of the Trade Facilitation Agreement, many are still lagging behind, as demonstrated by the proportion of category A measures implemented by those countries. Only seven landlocked developing countries have implemented more than 50 per cent of the measures under category A. The implementation of the measures of the Agreement by landlocked developing countries is relatively low compared with other developing countries, as shown in table 3.

Table 3
Rate of implementation commitments
(Percentage)

Category	*Rate of implementation commitments as of August 2018*	*Rate of implementation commitments from December 2018 to February 2027 without capacity-building support*	*Rate of implementation commitments from September 2018 to February 2032 upon receipt of capacity-building support*	*Rate of implementation commitments yet to be designated*
All WTO members	60.6	7.9	11.3	20.3
Developing countries	59.3	8.5	10.1	22.2
Landlocked developing countries	34.0	19.4	26.4	20.2

Source: WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement database, updated August 2018.

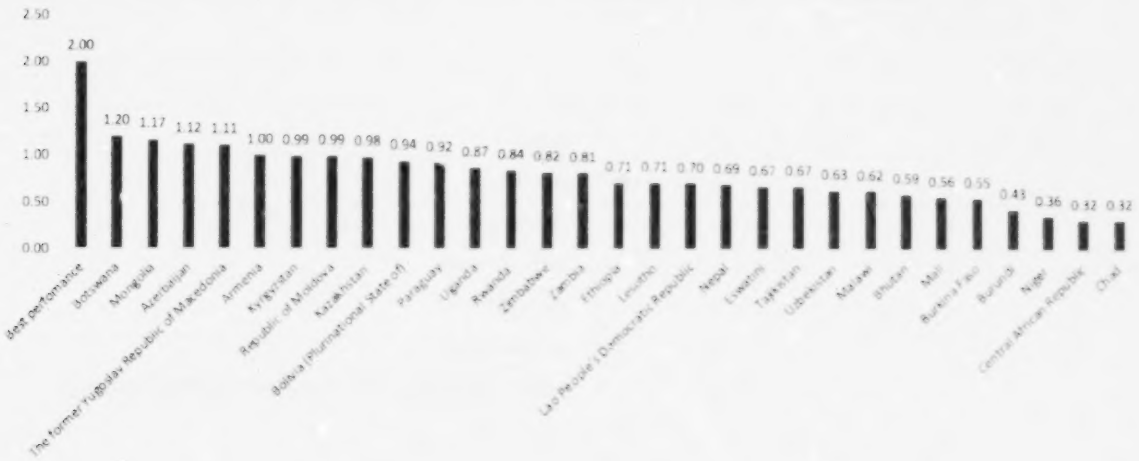
38. Comparing the trade facilitation performance of landlocked developing countries to that of transit countries, landlocked developing countries lag behind their transit counterparts in implementation, as demonstrated by the trade facilitation indicators. OECD developed the trade facilitation indicators to help governments measure trade facilitation performance in terms of the implementation of various

[1] OECD, "Implementation of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement: the potential impact on trade costs" (June 2015). Available at www.oecd.org/trade/WTO-TF-Implementation-Policy-Brief_EN_2015_06.pdf.

[2] Category A measures are those measures that developing members will implement by 22 February 2017, the date of entry into force of the Trade Facilitation Agreement. For least developed countries, that date is 22 February 2018.

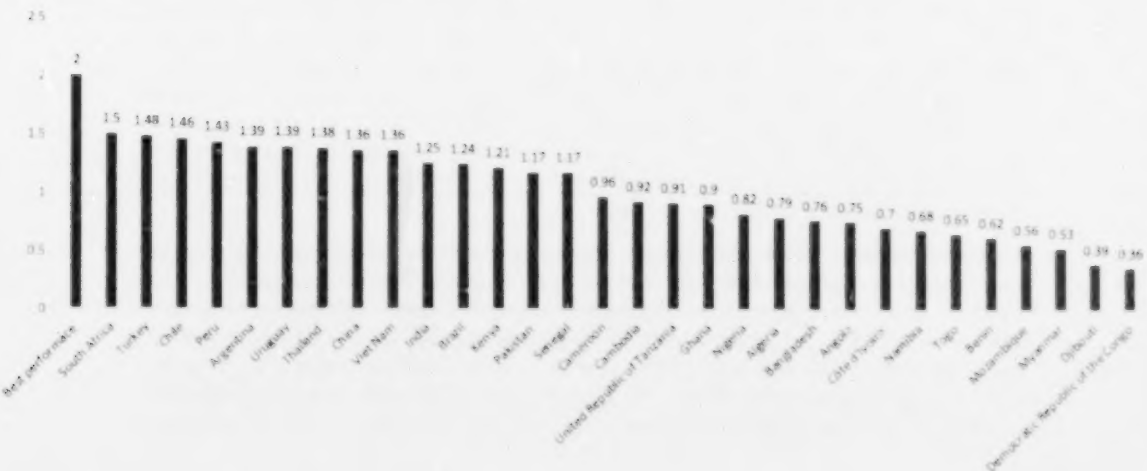
policy areas and measures included in the Trade Facilitation Agreement, including information availability, involvement of the trade community, advance rulings, appeal procedures, fees and charges, documents, automation, procedures, internal border agency cooperation, external border agency cooperation and governance and impartiality. The trade facilitation indicators are ranked from 0 to 2, where 2 denotes the best performance that can be achieved. Figures III and IV show the OECD trade facilitation indicators for landlocked developing countries and transit countries for 2017. The data show that only 17 per cent of the landlocked developing countries for which data were available had trade facilitation indicators of at least 1, while that figure was 47 per cent for transit countries. In both categories of countries, most of the African countries had the lowest trade facilitation indicators.

Figure III
Trade facilitation indicators for landlocked developing countries



Source: OECD database.

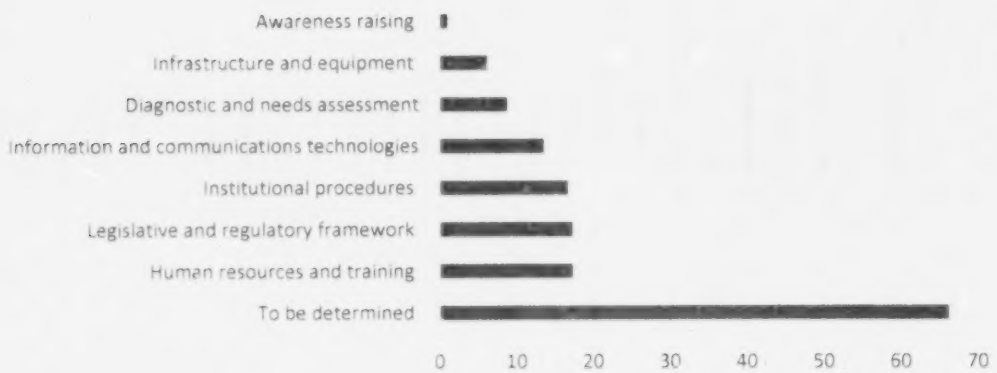
Figure IV
Trade facilitation indicators for transit countries



Source: OECD database.

39. According to the Trade Facilitation Agreement, developing countries and landlocked developing countries are required to provide information to WTO regarding the capacities needed to fully implement the Agreement. According to the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement database, the most common measures indicated by landlocked developing countries as requiring technical and financial assistance to implement include the single-window concept, testing procedures, border agency cooperation, authorized operators and average release times. Figure V shows the types of assistance requested by landlocked developing countries. The "To be determined category" refers to those category C measures[3] for which States have not yet indicated the type of assistance needed. The high percentage of measures in the "To be determined" category might be an indication that landlocked developing countries also require technical assistance to assess their capacity needs.

Figure V
Type of technical assistance requested
(Percentage)



Source: WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement database.

Priority 4: regional integration and cooperation

40. Making full use of the untapped potential of deepened regional integration can contribute to improved economic growth, increase trade and business linkages and foster competitive global integration, while attracting enhanced flows of foreign direct investment (FDI). For landlocked developing countries, regional coordination can also promote economies of scale for infrastructure investments across borders and foster harmonized and consolidated transit procedures, which would reduce transit costs. Joint regional efforts to reduce transit time through corridor facilitation are also crucial to improving export competitiveness and attracting more business to landlocked developing countries.

41. The majority of landlocked developing countries have become more active participants in regional trade agreements and economic blocks (see table 4) and typically trade more with their neighbours and within their regional communities compared with other countries in their respective regions. In Africa, intraregional trade is typically low and only 11 per cent of total African imports that enter under free trade agreements come from within the region. In contrast, goods imported by landlocked developing countries more often originate from other African countries,

[3] Category C measures are those measures that States will need additional time and capacity-building support to implement.

as their share of intra-African imports ranges (with the exception of one landlocked developing country) between 13 and 58 per cent. In addition, on average, 56 per cent of intra-African imports come from within the same regional economic community, whereas that share is over 70 per cent for 11 of the 16 African landlocked developing countries. In Asia,[4] the average share of landlocked developing countries' exports and imports that took place under regional preferential trade agreements was 46 per cent for exports and 53 per cent for imports during 2014–2016. In contrast, the average among Asia-Pacific economies was 43 per cent for exports and 50 per cent for imports.

Table 4
Participation of landlocked developing countries in regional trade agreements and other regional economic communities and regional blocks

Country	*Regional trade agreements*[a]	*Other regional economic communities, regional blocks and arrangements*
Afghanistan	SAFTA	ECO
Armenia	EAEU, CIS	BSEC, TRACECA
Azerbaijan	CIS, ODED-GUAM	ECO, BSEC, TRACECA
Bhutan	SAFTA, SAPTA	
Bolivia (Plurinational Republic of)	CAN, LAIA	UNASUR
Botswana	SACU, SADC	
Burkina Faso	ECOWAS, WAEMU	CEN-SAD
Burundi	COMESA, EAC	ECCAS
Central African Republic	CEMAC	ECCAS, CEN-SAD
Chad	CEMAC	ECCAS, CEN-SAD
Eswatini	COMESA, SADC	
Ethiopia	COMESA	IGAD
Kazakhstan	CEZ, EAEU, CIS, Russian Federation-Belarus-Kazakhstan	ECO, SCO, TRACECA
Kyrgyzstan	EAEU, CIS	ECO, SCO, TRACECA
Lao People's Democratic Republic	ASEAN, AFTA, APTA	
Lesotho	COMESA, SACU, SADC	
Malawi	COMESA, SADC	
Mali	ECOWAS, WAEMU	CEN-SAD
Mongolia		Mongolia-Russian Federation-China
Nepal	SAFTA, SAPTA	

[4] Including Azerbaijan and Armenia.

Country	*Regional trade agreements*[a]	*Other regional economic communities, regional blocks and arrangements*
Niger	ECOWAS, WAEMU	CEN-SAD
Paraguay	LAIA, PTN, MERCOSUR	UNASUR[b]
Republic of Moldova	CEFTA, European Union Association Agreement, ODED-GUAM, CIS	BSEC, TRACECA
Rwanda	EAC, COMESA	ECCAS
South Sudan		IGAD
Tajikistan	CIS	ECO, SCO, TRACECA
The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	CEFTA, EFTA, European Union Stabilization and Association Agreement	
Turkmenistan	CIS	ECO
Uganda	COMESA, EAC	IGAD
Uzbekistan	CIS	ECO, SCO, TRACECA
Zambia	COMESA, SADC	
Zimbabwe	COMESA, SADC	

Source: The table is based on the WTO Regional Trade Agreements database and Internet research and may not be exhaustive.

Abbreviations: AFTA, Association of Southeast Asian Nations Free Trade Area; APTA, Asia-Pacific Trade Agreement; ASEAN, Association of Southeast Asian Nations; BSEC, Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation; CAN, Andean Community; CEFTA, Central European Free Trade Agreement; CEMAC, Central African Economic and Monetary Community; CEN-SAD, Community of Sahel-Saharan States; CEZ, Common Economic Zone; CIS, Treaty on a Free Trade Area between members of the Commonwealth of Independent States; COMESA, Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa; EAC, East African Community; EAEU, Eurasian Economic Union; ECCAS, Economic Community of Central African States; ECO, Economic Cooperation Organization; ECOWAS, Economic Community of West African States; EFTA, European Free Trade Association; IGAD, Intergovernmental Authority on Development; LAIA, Latin American Integration Association; MERCOSUR, Southern Common Market; ODED-GUAM, Organization for Democracy and Economic Development-GUAM; PTN, Protocol Relating to Trade Negotiations among Developing Countries; SACU, Southern African Customs Union; SADC, Southern African Development Community; SAFTA, South Asian Free Trade Agreement; SAPTA, South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation Preferential Trade Arrangement; SCO, Shanghai Cooperation Organization; TRACECA, Transport Corridor Europe Caucasus Asia; UNASUR, Union of South American Nations; WAEMU, West African Economic and Monetary Union.

[a] Regional trade agreements (excluding cross-regional agreements) that were notified to WTO.

[b] Paraguay suspended its membership in the Union of South American Nations in April 2018.

42. The economic integration of Africa reached a new milestone in Kigali on 21 March 2018 when African Union member States signed the agreement on the establishment of the African Continental Free Trade Area. The agreement will enter into force upon ratification by 22 African Union member States. The agreement includes provisions on trade facilitation, transit and customs cooperation that will be of particular benefit to landlocked developing countries. However, enhancing their capacities in manufacturing and strengthening regional trade can help landlocked developing countries take full advantage of the opportunities of the agreement. The implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action will contribute towards harnessing the full potential of the African Continental Free Trade Area.

43. In Asia, the China-led Belt and Road Initiative shows promising prospects for landlocked developing countries in terms of promoting regional integration, strengthening regional infrastructure, developing regional value chains and driving the harmonization of national policies. The Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, a proposed free trade agreement between the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), of which the Lao People's Democratic Republic is a member, and the six states with which ASEAN has existing free trade agreements (Australia, China, India, Japan, New Zealand and South Korea) is expected to be signed in November 2018.

44. Where investment provisions are part of regional trade agreements, there is stronger impact in terms of attracting greater regional value chain activity and narrowing the competitiveness gap between large and small firms. There have been active developments in international investment policymaking in regions with landlocked developing countries. In Asia, several rounds of negotiations took place throughout 2016 and 2017 on the proposed Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, including its investment provisions. In Latin America, the member States of the Southern Common Market, which includes Paraguay, signed a protocol on cooperation and the facilitation of investment in April 2017. In Africa, SADC member States amended annex I of its Protocol on Finance and Investment in August 2016.

Priority 5: structural economic transformation

45. The Vienna Programme of Action places an emphasis on building productive capacities and enhancing structural economic transformation in landlocked developing countries. While some individual countries recorded successes, the progress towards structural economic transformation has been limited in most landlocked developing countries. The value-added contribution of the manufacturing sector, which is a key component of industrialization, stood at around just 8.7 per cent of GDP during 2015–2017. It has been on a declining trend since 1990, when it was 15.7 per cent of GDP, indicating signs of de-industrialization. Furthermore, landlocked developing countries' share of world manufacturing value added and of world manufacturing trade is negligible, accounting for only 0.39 and 0.31 per cent, respectively, in 2016. Therefore, landlocked developing countries have a very limited capacity to produce and export manufactured goods.

46. Landlocked developing countries' share of manufactured goods in total merchandise exports (see figure VI) amounted to 17.5 per cent in 2016. In comparison, however, the share for all developing countries stood at 71.1 per cent. Their share of primary commodities, precious stones and non-monetary gold, while decreasing in recent years, likely owing to falls in commodity prices, remains high at 81.9 per cent of total exports. That indicates their dependence on primary commodities, which are typically low value added.

47. Limited manufacturing and industrial capacity hampers the integration of landlocked developing countries into value chains, as modern manufacturing relies on the import and export of components through regional and global value chains. Estimates suggest that the share of developing countries in total value added created by global value chains was just 38 per cent. Landlocked developing countries need to strive to add value to their products in order to link up to value chains.

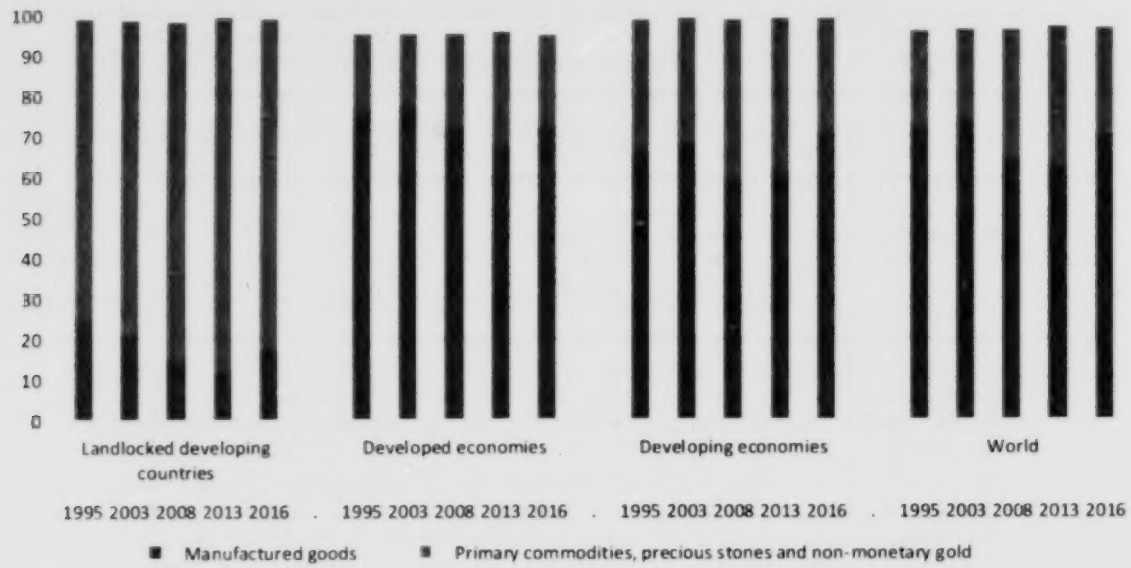
48. In addition, the exports of landlocked developing countries are concentrated in a very limited number of products. Their concentration index (as measured by the Herfindahl-Hirschman Index[5]) reached a high of 0.38 in 2013. While falling to 0.22

[5] In which a value closer to 1 indicates a country's exports or imports are highly concentrated in a few products.

in 2016, it is still considerably higher than the 0.09 reported for developing countries. At the same time, the trade structures of landlocked developing countries have not become more diversified over time in comparison with the global average, as measured by the diversification index.[6] It has remained at above 0.6 since 1995, while in contrast developing countries as a whole had a diversification index of 0.2 in 2016. That lack of diversification makes landlocked developing countries vulnerable to external shocks and limits their competitiveness and ability to create high value-added products, meaningful productive employment and innovative technologies.

Figure VI
Share of primary commodities and manufactured goods in exports

(Percentage)



Source: UNCTADstat.

49. Data from the Doing Business database of the World Bank, which compares the ease of doing business in 190 countries, shows that the majority of landlocked developing countries have shown improvements in creating enabling regulatory environments for the local private sector, which is crucial for developing an industrial base. From 2 June 2016 to 1 June 2017, 1 landlocked developing country ranked in the top 20 countries in terms of its business regulatory environment and has carried out the second highest number of reforms since 2003, and 3 more ranked in the top quarter of countries. Another 3 were identified on the list of top 10 improvers. That is indicative of those economies undertaking ongoing, broad reform programmes, pointing to improvements in their economies. At the same time, 19 landlocked developing countries ranked in the bottom half of the rankings and 10 have experienced setbacks in their regulatory reform efforts since 2003.

50. The value-added contribution of the agriculture sector to the economy also declined in landlocked developing countries over the past two decades, but increased from 14.7 per cent in 2014 to 16.2 per cent in 2017. At the same time, agriculture accounts for around 50 per cent of employment in those countries, suggesting low

[6] Computed by measuring the absolute deviation of the trade structure of a country from the global trade structure; a value closer to 1 indicates greater divergence from the world pattern.

relative levels of productivity of agriculture in comparison with the other sectors. In addition, since 2000, the gap between the productivity of their agricultural sectors and those of OECD countries has not become any smaller. Landlocked developing countries should therefore make efforts to raise agricultural productivity and industrialize agriculture, including by employing industrial production methods and expanding value chains for agribusiness and agroprocessing.

51. Utilizing technology in the production of manufactured products can help landlocked developing countries add value to their products; however, that is an area where they are still facing some challenges. Landlocked developing countries lag behind in technology-intensive manufactured exports compared with developing countries and developed countries. However, landlocked developing countries as a group have made a large leap with regard to employing skill and technology in the production of manufactured products since the early 2000s. They have moved away from exports of "labour-intensive and resource-intensive manufactures",[7] whose share in manufactured products exports has almost halved from 49.7 per cent in 2000 to 25.6 per cent in 2016. In contrast, the share of "high-skill and technology-intensive manufactures"[8] exports has increased from 20.5 to 37.6 per cent.

52. Given their geographic obstacles, remoteness and isolation from markets and high transit costs, the services sector, and in particular tourism, is increasingly being recognized as an important sector for landlocked developing countries in terms of creating entrepreneurship opportunities and full and productive employment and fostering economic growth. The development of airline routes and the sustaining of their economic viability through tourism also contributes to diversifying market access for various economic activities.

Priority 6: means of implementation

53. In 2016, landlocked developing countries received $25.8 billion in ODA from all donors, amounting to 16 per cent of ODA flows to developing countries that year, a real increase of 4.4 per cent since 2015. However, only six countries accounted for 54 per cent of the group's total ODA receipts.

54. ODA continued to be a relatively large and stable source of flows to landlocked developing countries, accounting for more than 10 per cent of gross national income (GNI) in six countries. In four of those countries, ODA accounted for more than 20 per cent of GNI. The role of ODA in government budget support has often been critical for the provision of essential services and infrastructure.

55. Figure VII depicts the inflow of ODA, FDI and remittances to landlocked developing countries between 2010 and 2016.

56. In 2017, the share of FDI flows into landlocked developing countries accounted for 1.6 per cent of global inflows, an increase from 1.2 per cent in 2016. According to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), after a five-year decline, FDI flows to those countries amounted to $23 billion, a 3 per cent rise from 2016. That increase was relatively modest, and FDI flows to those countries remained about 40 per cent lower than their peak in 2011. However, FDI flows remain concentrated in a few countries, with the top five recipients accounting for 66 per cent of total flows to the group, while others receive very little in FDI. The majority of FDI flows to landlocked developing countries are to the extractive sectors, such as mining, quarrying and petroleum, which accounted for 66 per cent of total announced

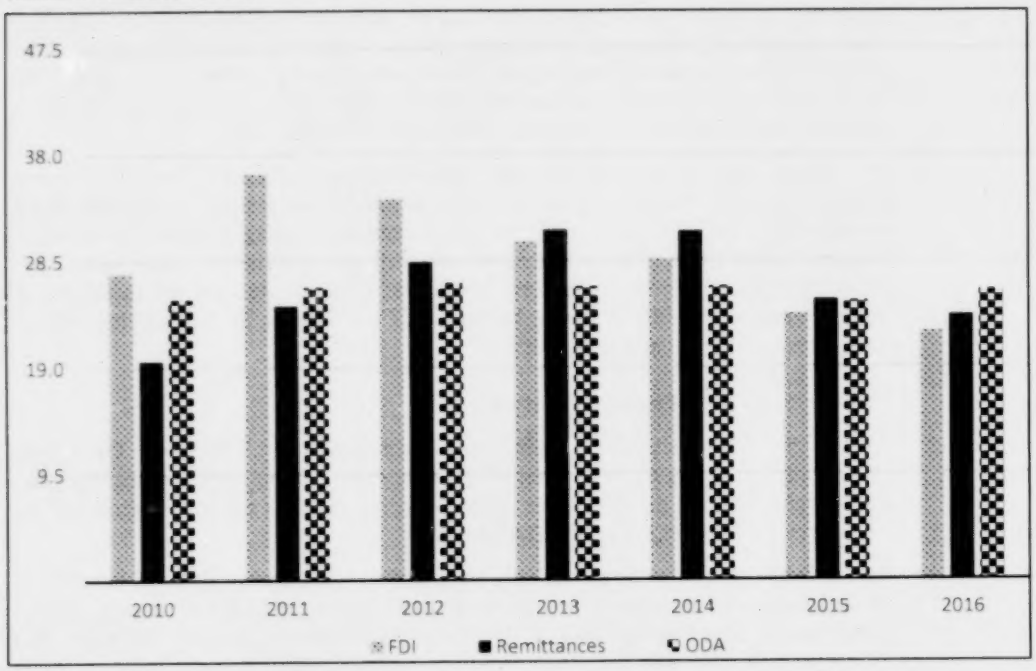
[7] See http://unctadstat.unctad.org/EN/Classifications/DimSiteRev3Products_Tdr_Hierarchy.pdf.
[8] Ibid.

greenfield FDI projects in 2016, followed by manufacturing (including food, textiles, chemicals and coke).

57. China is becoming the largest source of FDI stock for landlocked developing countries. In 2016, China had $29 billion in FDI stock in those countries, followed by France ($13 billion), Canada ($6 billion), the Russian Federation ($5 billion), South Africa ($4 billion) and Thailand ($3 billion). Those figures show the increasing importance of South-South cooperation to landlocked developing countries.

Figure VII
Official development assistance, foreign direct investment and remittances to landlocked developing countries

(Billions of United States dollars)



Source: World Bank, UNCTAD, OECD.
Abbreviations: FDI, foreign direct investment; ODA, official development assistance.

58. In 2016, remittances to landlocked developing countries declined by $2 billion, accounting for only $23.8 billion of the total global flow. Remittances as a percentage of GDP increased from 3.86 in 2015 to 3.92 in 2016. Remittance inflows to landlocked developing countries were unevenly distributed, with three countries accounting for almost 46 per cent of the group's total in 2016.

IV. Follow-up and review

59. The Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States continued to coordinate activities of the United Nations system to ensure the effective implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action. To that end, the Office of the High Representative convened two inter-agency consultative group meetings during the reporting period. The meetings offered the opportunity to discuss progress achieved by various organizations of the United Nations system and other

international organizations in the implementation of the Programme of Action and to foster collaboration and joint work.

60. The Office of the High Representative organized several meetings to advocate and raise awareness with respect to the landlocked developing countries and to foster coherence with the implementation of and follow-up to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Office organized the following meetings in the reporting period: an expert group meeting on financing infrastructure development; a Ministerial Meeting of the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries in the margins of the eleventh Ministerial Conference of WTO, in collaboration with the Chair of the Group; and side events with partners on energy, the private sector, aviation and on Sustainable Development Goal 14 in the margins of major meetings of the General Assembly. The events helped raise awareness and promote the implementation of the priority areas of the Vienna Programme of Action.

61. The Office of the High Representative, together with WTO and other agencies, are working on a project to enhance efficiency at border crossings. The Office is supporting the Chair of the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries and WTO on a capacity-building project to promote the implementation of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement by those countries and transit countries.

62. The Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) organized many advisory and training activities, meetings and capacity-building workshops on all the priority areas of the Vienna Programme of Action. ECE, in cooperation with the Islamic Development Bank, is developing an international transport infrastructure observatory.

63. The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific undertook capacity-building and training activities and sectoral research, facilitated regional cooperation, provided policy advisory services and tools for making evidence-based trade and investment policies, and facilitated the sharing of experiences. The support was aimed towards the development of dry ports, highway and railway connectivity, energy, international trade and trade facilitation, ICT and statistics.

64. The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) provided technical assistance to the integration initiatives in the region including the Union of South American Nations, the Southern Common Market and the Andean Community. ECLAC is also working on a project on promoting the use of inland navigation in the countries of the River Plate basin.

65. The Economic Commission for Africa provided technical assistance towards the establishment of the African Continental Free Trade Area and undertook analytical and capacity-building work on trade facilitation and FDI.

66. UNCTAD is working on building productive capacity indicators for landlocked developing countries and undertakes capacity-building and technical assistance on various thematic areas, including investment, trade and transport logistics. In January 2017, UNCTAD, in collaboration with other international organizations and partners, organized the first International Forum for National Trade Facilitation Committees.

67. The International Trade Centre prepared a report on the competitiveness outlook for small and medium-sized enterprises focused on regional strategies, which included an analysis of nine landlocked developing countries. It also created the first regional trade obstacles alert mechanism, interlinking eight countries in the West African Economic and Monetary Union, including Mali and the Niger.

68. The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) is providing capacity-building and advisory services support to landlocked developing countries on sustainable broadband development. ITU has also produced country case studies regarding

connectivity opportunities and challenges for the Plurinational State of Bolivia and Paraguay.

69. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations is working with landlocked developing countries to improve national capacities with regard to formulating appropriate trade-related policies, mainstream agricultural trade into national development and poverty reduction strategies and develop tools for their effective participation in the multilateral trading system. It is currently undertaking research on food price volatility in markets in both landlocked and coastal countries.

70. The United Nations Industrial Development Organization is currently supporting landlocked developing countries with structural transformation and economic diversification, including through its country partnership programme, with the goal of generating the emergence of a stable and sustainable industrial sector.

71. The United Nations Environment Programme has developed several global-level tools and resources that aim to help developing countries, including Burkina Faso and Mongolia, take advantage of opportunities arising from greener trade practices and policies.

72. The action plan for South-South cooperation was adopted as a vital pillar of the Secretary-General's climate change engagement strategy (2017–2021). In January 2018, the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation launched the QIAO plan on climate cooperation to aid the implementation of the action plan for South-South cooperation, which will support small- and large-scale projects on nature conservation and climate change.

73. The United Nations Development Programme is supporting the implementation of projects in some landlocked developing countries, most of which are related to accelerating access to renewable energy, entrepreneurship and job creation, and diversification.

74. The United Nations Population Fund supports governments in developing and targeting relevant investments in empowerment, health, education, employment and data.

75. WTO organized the Global Review on Aid for Trade, held from 30 June to 2 July 2017, on the theme "Promoting trade, inclusiveness and connectivity for sustainable development". The Global Review focused on how and why trade connectivity was critical for inclusiveness, sustainable growth and poverty reduction, and stressed the importance of physical and digital connectivity in enabling global trade.

76. The World Bank currently has 48 active lending projects in 24 landlocked developing countries amounting to $10.8 billion. Of the 48 projects, 34 are ongoing transport and ICT projects that include maintenance, rehabilitation, upgrading or new construction. The World Bank is also supporting the development of necessary broadband infrastructure and promoting the concept of a national broadband policy.

77. The World Customs Organization continues to deliver capacity-building, technical assistance and training to requesting customs administrations, including in landlocked developing countries, to assist them with reform and modernization, and is undertaking workshops to promote the implementation of the transit guidelines.

78. The Asian Development Bank provided $4.3 billion in loans and grants to landlocked developing countries during the 2015–2017 period, accounting for around 32 per cent of the Bank's overall regional cooperation and integration support. Over 85 per cent of the lending volume was provided to the transport and energy sectors (45.8 and 43.0 per cent respectively).

79. The International Finance Corporation is facilitating the connectivity of landlocked developing countries by promoting private sector solutions that help fill critical development gaps in basic infrastructure transport, logistics, ICT and energy, promoting regional integration and economic opportunities and supporting private sector development.

80. The field operations in Central Asia of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe organized a wide range of capacity-building activities and targeted training sessions related to the various aspects of trade facilitation, transit transport development, customs and border regulations in 2017.

81. The International Road Transport Union continues to raise awareness and undertake efforts to build the capacity of landlocked developing countries and transit countries to implement international road transport.

82. The Common Fund for Commodities continues to invest in projects that promote structural economic transformation of commodity sectors in landlocked developing countries. In 2017, the Fund considered 47 project proposals originating from landlocked developing countries, and selected 3 projects for further consideration.

83. The International Chamber of Commerce, as part of the Global Alliance for Trade Facilitation, along with the World Economic Forum and the Center for International Private Enterprise, and in cooperation with and the German Agency for International Cooperation, are currently implementing trade facilitation projects in transit countries such as Ghana, Kenya and Viet Nam, and in Zambia, which is a landlocked developing country.

84. The Economic Cooperation Organization is undertaking activities to deepen regional integration among its member States, including with regard to transport infrastructure, energy and disaster risk reduction.

V. Status of preparations for the comprehensive high-level midterm review on the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action

85. The General Assembly, in its resolution 72/232, decided to hold a comprehensive high-level midterm review on the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action. The Assembly designated the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States as the United Nations system-wide focal point for the preparatory review process and invited other United Nations system organizations, within their respective mandates, to provide necessary support and actively contribute to the preparatory process and the high-level midterm review of the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action.

86. The General Assembly mandated that costs relating to the midterm review and its preparation be financed through voluntary contributions. In that regard, the Office of the High Representative is undertaking the mobilization of resources. The Inter-Agency Consultative Group for Landlocked Developing Countries held a meeting that discussed ways to forge collaboration towards the organization of the midterm review and its preparatory process.

87. The first activity related to the high-level midterm review was a Ministerial Meeting of Landlocked Developing Countries on trade and transport, hosted by the Government of Kazakhstan in Astana in May 2018. The meeting adopted a declaration that contained recommendations regarding transport connectivity, structural transformation and trade and trade facilitation.

88. The landlocked developing countries have been invited to submit their national reports to inform the midterm review. The Office of the High Representative is consulting with the regional commissions and Member States with regard to the preparations of the regional meetings.

VI. Inauguration of the International Think Tank for Landlocked Developing Countries

89. The Multilateral Agreement for the Establishment of an International Think Tank for Landlocked Developing Countries entered into force on 6 October 2017. The Think Tank was proposed by the Government of Mongolia with the support of the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries and is located in Ulaanbaatar. The Think Tank was inaugurated during a Ministerial Meeting of Landlocked Developing Countries held in June 2018, which adopted a declaration. The Think Tank is the first intergovernmental body of the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries, and it is a milestone achievement in efforts to address their special needs. The Think Tank aims to serve as a centre of excellence for research and policy advice and to strengthen the analytical capacities of landlocked developing countries on issues of critical importance to their development. In so doing, the Think Tank will foster informed solutions, promote national ownership and help accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Vienna Programme of Action.

VII. Conclusions and recommendations

90. **Landlocked developing countries face special challenges associated with their lack of direct territorial access to the sea and their remoteness and isolation from world markets. The countries are making efforts towards achieving some of the Sustainable Development Goals; however, their progress is slow, as they mostly lag behind the averages of the other developing countries and the world.**

91. **There is a need to do more to address the special challenges associated with being landlocked, and to ensure that landlocked developing countries are not left behind. Priority attention and support should be given to those countries regarding the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and their follow-up processes.**

92. **With consistent and dedicated efforts on the part of landlocked developing countries, supported by strong partnerships and enhanced collaboration with transit countries, development partners, the United Nations system, international and regional organizations, the private sector and other stakeholders, landlocked developing countries should be able to accelerate progress in implementing the Vienna Programme of Action and turn themselves into "landlinked" countries.**

93. **The General Assembly, in its resolution 72/279 on the repositioning of the United Nations development system, agreed on reforms that will improve the United Nations system's collective support to countries as they implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular with regard to landlocked developing countries, which are among the nations that most need the assistance of the United Nations system.**

94. **The scale of funding and financing needed to close the transport infrastructure gap of landlocked developing countries and bring it to comparable global standards is daunting. Strong partnerships will be crucial to bridging that gap. In addition, landlocked developing countries could consider increasing domestic financing and being more cost-effective and efficient in using the**

funding that is available. It is important that multilateral and regional development banks support landlocked developing countries and transit countries in developing bankable infrastructure and transport projects that are financially viable and environmentally friendly, and provide the resources to implement those projects.

95. **Development partners are invited to increase ODA towards the development of transport and energy infrastructure.**

96. **Landlocked developing countries require continued and enhanced investment and technical assistance aimed at strengthening their capacity for the collection of data, especially on transport, in order to produce reliable and frequent statistics to monitor the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and the Vienna Programme of Action.**

97. **Development partners should consider assisting landlocked developing countries in developing ICT infrastructure and helping to ensure that appropriate policies and legal and regulatory frameworks are in place to support ICT development and close the digital divide. That will also help those countries utilize opportunities related to e-commerce.**

98. **Landlocked developing countries should consider the gradual liberalization of air transport to enhance competitiveness and lower service costs.**

99. **Landlocked developing countries and transit countries are encouraged to foster cooperation and ratify and implement relevant international conventions.**

100. **The sharing of national experiences and lessons learned among landlocked developing countries and transit countries is an important element of cooperation and should be supported by the international community.**

101. **The landlocked developing countries and transit countries that are members of WTO should enhance their efforts to implement the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement. The enhanced provision of technical, financial and capacity-building assistance to those countries is necessary to ensure the effective implementation of the Agreement. To facilitate the acquisition of assistance, landlocked developing countries need to indicate their capacity needs for the measures listed under category C of the Agreement.**

102. **Landlocked developing countries aiming to increase exports through value chains should consider making investment provisions part of regional trade agreements, as deep regional trade agreements help deliver greater regional value chain activity and narrow the competitiveness gap between large and small firms.**

103. **Landlocked developing countries should focus on enhancing their capacity to produce modern and higher value-added products, focus on high-productivity sectors and industrialize their agriculture sectors, and should continue to utilize new and existing technology in the production of manufactured products in order to add value to their products and connect with regional and global value chains.**

104. **Landlocked developing countries should continue to make improvements in creating enabling regulatory environments for business, which are crucial to developing a strong industrial base and attracting investment. Development partners are invited to provide technical, financial and capacity-building assistance to support such efforts.**

105. **Landlocked developing countries can attract more FDI by improving their regulatory environments and by engaging in regional integration initiatives and deepening their cooperation with transit countries.**

106. **The international community is invited to provide support to the International Think Tank for Landlocked Developing Countries.**

107. **Those landlocked developing countries that have not yet ratified the Multilateral Agreement for the Establishment of an International Think Tank for Landlocked Developing Countries are encouraged to do so.**

108. **The comprehensive high-level midterm review on the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action, to be held in 2019, shall review progress made, identify obstacles and constraints encountered and provide recommendations to further accelerate its implementation. It should also reaffirm and strengthen partnerships for implementation. The international community should give particular importance to the preparatory process and ensure its active support and participation in the midterm review.**

Annex

Statistical tables

Table 1
Gross domestic product, rate of growth, official development assistance and foreign direct investment

Landlocked developing countries	*GDP (constant 2010 prices, billions of United States dollars)*		*GDP growth (annual percentage)*		*Official development assistance disbursements (current prices, millions of United States dollars)*	*Foreign direct investment inflows (millions of United States dollars)*
	2015	*2016*	*2015*	*2016*	*2016*	*2016*
Afghanistan	20.89	21.63	-1.79	3.56	4 064	100
Armenia	12.24	12.26	3.24	0.19	327	338
Azerbaijan	58.13	56.69	0.65	-2.49	78	4 500
Bhutan	2.07	2.23	6.60	7.99	52	-12
Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	25.66	26.76	4.86	4.26	696	410
Botswana	16.15	16.84	-1.70	4.29	91	10
Burkina Faso	11.69	12.38	3.89	5.92	1 023	309
Burundi	2.41	2.45	-0.30	1.70	742	0
Central African Republic	1.43	1.50	4.80	4.53	500	31
Chad	11.89	11.49	4.40	-3.40	624	560
Eswatini	5.47	5.47	4.19	-0.01	147	-11
Ethiopia	43.54	46.83	10.39	7.56	4 074	3 196
Kazakhstan	188.65	190.47	1.15	0.96	60	9 069
Kyrgyzstan	6.06	6.29	3.88	3.83	515	467
Lao People's Democratic Republic	10.63	11.38	7.27	7.02	399	890
Lesotho	2.98	3.07	5.61	2.87	113	132
Malawi	8.44	8.69	2.80	2.96	1 243	326
Mali	15.88	17.13	7.61	7.87	1 209	126
Mongolia	11.68	11.79	2.38	0.95	325	-4 072
Nepal	20.12	20.20	3.32	0.41	1 064	106
Niger	7.70	8.09	3.96	5.04	951	293
Paraguay	25.40	26.41	2.96	3.95	89	274
Republic of Moldova	7.03	7.33	-0.43	4.27	328	143

Landlocked developing countries	GDP (constant 2010 prices, billions of United States dollars)		GDP growth (annual percentage)		Official development assistance disbursements (current prices, millions of United States dollars)	Foreign direct investment inflows (millions of United States dollars)
	2015	2016	2015	2016	2016	2016
Rwanda	8.31	8.81	8.89	5.95	1 148	410
South Sudan	12.56	12.60	5.06	0.32	1 590	-17
Tajikistan	7.55	8.07	5.97	6.90	334	434
The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	10.62	10.92	3.86	2.91	168	397
Turkmenistan	37.25	39.56	6.50	6.20	33	4 522
Uganda	25.04	25.62	5.67	2.32	1 757	541
Uzbekistan	58.25	61.74	7.87	6.00	457	67
Zambia	26.06	27.00	2.92	3.61	963	469
Zimbabwe	14.58	14.67	1.42	0.65	655	319
Total/average	**22.39**	**23.01**	**3.49**	**2.79**	**25 821**	**24 326**

Source: Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.

Table 2
Merchandise exports and imports and sectoral contributions to the economy

Landlocked developing country	Merchandise exports (millions of United States dollars, 2017)	Merchandise imports (millions of United States dollars, 2017)	Share of exports in global exports (percentage, 2017)	Manufacturing (value-added approach, percentage of GDP)		Agriculture, forestry, fishing (value-added approach, percentage of GDP)		Services (value-added approach, percentage of GDP)	
				2016	2017	2016	2017	2016	2017
Afghanistan	780	7 700	0.004	11.3	..	21.0	..	53.0	..
Armenia	2 243	4 183	0.013	10.3	10.2	16.4	14.9	49.9	51.3
Azerbaijan	15 800	8 600	0.089	4.9	4.7	5.6	5.6	38.8	37.5
Bhutan	590	1 000	0.003	7.5	7.1	16.5	15.2	37.4	39.3
Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	7 714	9 257	0.044	11.0	10.5	11.2	11.6	49.8	48.7
Botswana	5 896	5 139	0.033	5.2	5.1	2.0	2.0	50.3	58.7
Burkina Faso	2 408	3 418	0.014	6.6	5.6	29.0	27.8	42.1	42.0
Burundi	161	805	0.001	9.2	..	36.4	..	..	..
Central African Republic	124	351	0.001	..	..	40.5	39.6	38.8	39.3

Landlocked developing country	Merchandise exports (millions of United States dollars, 2017)	Merchandise imports (millions of United States dollars, 2017)	Share of exports in global exports (percentage, 2017)	Manufacturing (value-added approach, percentage of GDP)		Agriculture, forestry, fishing (value-added approach, percentage of GDP)		Services (value-added approach, percentage of GDP)	
				2016	2017	2016	2017	2016	2017
Chad	1 300	2 800	0.007	3.2	..	49.5	48.6	32.7	33.5
Eswatini	2 016	1 617	0.011	..	..	..	..	..	..
Ethiopia	3 170	16 289	0.018	5.6	5.6	34.8	34.1	36.5	36.9
Kazakhstan	48 342	29 305	0.273	11.3	11.2	4.6	4.4	57.9	57.4
Kyrgyzstan	1 791	4 481	0.010	15.4	15.1	12.8	12.3	50.1	50.4
Lao People's Democratic Republic	3 950	5 100	0.022	7.8	7.5	17.2	16.2	42.5	41.5
Lesotho	1 033	2 115	0.006	15.6	..	5.2	..	52.6	..
Malawi	1 026	2 434	0.006	12.2	11.8	9.1	9.4	53.1	54.2
Mali	2 822	4 732	0.016	9.5	9.4	25.9	26.1	51.9	52.4
Mongolia	6 201	4 336	0.035	..	..	38.4	38.3	36.6	36.7
Nepal	750	10 500	0.004	11.8	11.5	12.1	12.2	56.1	55.4
Niger	1 193	1 701	0.007	7.3	8.3	11.7	10.4	..	..
Paraguay	8 680	11 875	0.049	5.3	5.2	29.2	27.0	50.0	51.5
Republic of Moldova	2 425	4 832	0.014	5.6	5.7	39.0	39.7	..	..
Rwanda	1 189	1 963	0.007	10.8	11.2	18.1	18.1	45.1	45.5
South Sudan	..	..	..	5.8	5.9	29.3	31.0	47.3	46.4
Tajikistan	1 200	2 700	0.007	31.4	..	9.5	..	51.0	..
The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	5 671	7 720	0.032	9.7	..	20.4	..	42.3	..
Turkmenistan	7 000	6 000	0.039	..	..	..	..	..	..
Uganda	2 790	5 439	0.016	8.7	8.2	23.7	24.9	47.6	47.1
Uzbekistan	10 500	12 000	0.059	..	..	16.1	17.3	45.4	42.5
Zambia	8 139	8 724	0.046	7.7	7.7	6.2	7.2	54.2	52.7
Zimbabwe	3 991	3 900	0.023	8.5	8.1	9.7	10.5	58.2	56.3
Total/average	**160 899**	**191 013**	**0.907**	**8.9**	**8.6**	**16.6**	**16.2**	**48.1**	**48.1**

Source: United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, World Bank.

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Item 24 (a) of the provisional agenda*
Eradication of poverty and other development issues

Implementation of the Third United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (2018–2027)

Report of the Secretary-General[1]

Summary

The present report of the Secretary-General is submitted to the General Assembly pursuant to its resolution 72/233. The report, established in cooperation with the United Nations system, presents the response of the United Nations system to the theme of the Third United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (2018–2027), as well as an inter-agency, system-wide plan of action for poverty eradication to coordinate the efforts of the United Nations system. It also contains recommendations for making the Third Decade effective, in support of the poverty eradication-related internationally agreed development goals, including the Sustainable Development Goals.

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[1] The present document was submitted late owing to a delayed clearance received from the Executive Office of the Secretary-General.

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I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 72/233, the General Assembly proclaimed the Third United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (2018–2027). It also considered that the theme of the Third Decade, to be reviewed at its seventy-third sessions, should be "Accelerating global actions for a world without poverty", in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The core of the present report consists of an inter-agency, system-wide plan of action for poverty eradication to coordinate the efforts of the United Nations system, as well as recommendations concerning how to make the Third Decade effective.[2]

II. Progress in eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions

2. As the international community embarks on the Third Decade for the Eradication of Poverty, an estimated 783 million people lived on less than $1.90 a day in 2013, compared with 1.867 billion people in 1990. Economic growth across developing countries has been remarkable since 2000, with faster growth in gross domestic product (GDP) per capita than advanced countries. This economic growth has fuelled poverty reduction and improvements in living standards. Achievements have also been recorded in such areas as job creation, gender equality, education and health care, social protection measures, agriculture and rural development, and climate change adaptation and mitigation.

3. However, poverty rates are still high in many countries in Africa and the least developed countries. In 2013, of the 783 million people living in extreme poverty, more than half were in sub-Saharan Africa and close to a third lived in Southern Asia. Pockets of poverty also afflict middle- and high-income countries. In 2017, extreme working poverty remained widespread, with more than 300 million workers in emerging and developing countries having a per capita household income or consumption below $1.90 per day. Working poverty is also high and rising in many high-income countries. On average, in 2013, in countries of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and development (OECD), around 11 per cent of workers lived in poverty, defined as below 50 per cent of median disposable income in each country. The number of those living below the pre-financial crisis poverty threshold increased between 2007 and 2011 across the OECD. There was also a shift in the age profile of poverty, with young people replacing the elderly as the group most at risk of poverty. Poverty rates rose among children, and in particular among young people, but fell among the elderly.[3] Furthermore, 50.3 per cent of people living in poverty are women.[4]

4. Besides income poverty, an estimated 815 million people suffered from hunger in 2016, compared with 777 million in 2015. Of those 815 million people, more than 489 million, or 60 per cent, lived in countries affected by conflict, drought and disasters. Increasing volatility of food prices also contributes to food emergencies. In

[2] For a detailed plan of action, see: www.un.org/esa/socdev/poverty/documents/3UNPovertyDecadeSWAPNarrative.pdf.

[3] Organization for Economic Cooperation and development (OECD), *In It Together: Why Less Inequality Benefits All* (Paris, 2015), available at https://www.oecd.org/els/soc/OECD2015-In-It-Together-Chapter1-Overview-Inequality.pdf.

[4] World Bank, "Gender Differences in Poverty and Household Composition through the Life-cycle", Policy Research Working Paper 8360 (March 2018), available at https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/29426/WPS8360.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y.

2016, 26 countries — most in sub-Saharan Africa — experienced high or moderately high levels of general food prices.[5] Furthermore, 844 million people lack basic water services, 4.5 billion lack access to safely managed sanitation and 892 million still practice open defecation. Almost 1 billion people also currently live without electricity, and 3 billion people lack access to clean-cooking solutions and are exposed to dangerous levels of indoor air pollution, which results in about 4 million deaths each year.[6]

5. Moreover, the poorest of the poor are subject to overlapping dimensions of poverty and inequalities. Using the global Multidimensional Poverty Index, 1.46 billion people across 104 countries were classified as poor in 2017. Of those, 689 million were children aged 0–17 years.

III. Response of the United Nations system to accelerating global actions for a world without poverty

6. To eradicate poverty by 2030, given current rates of population growth, it will be necessary to reduce by about 110 million every year the number of people living on less than $1.90 a day.[7] The United Nations system plays an important role in meeting that global challenge. The present section highlights priority areas of the response of the United Nations system as an integral component of global action for the effective implementation of the 2030 Agenda. While the support of the United Nations system is necessary, it will have the most impact when countries put in place the right integrated policies to fight poverty at the local, national and regional levels, supported by an enabling international environment, as recognized in relevant resolutions adopted by Member States.

A. Capacity-building for statistics for the 2030 Agenda

7. The timely collection and analysis of relevant data are vital for accelerating global actions for a world without poverty. Disaggregated data at the subnational and national levels enable Governments to understand poverty dynamics — in particular to identify the populations experiencing poverty and those at risk of falling back into poverty — in order to leave no one behind. In that regard, the United Nations system has prioritized strengthening national statistical systems to support national plans to implement the Sustainable Development Goals. Capacity development efforts encompass the collection, production, dissemination, analysis and use of quality data and statistics. Efforts also include strengthening institutional capacities of national statistical systems to improve the coverage, quality and frequency of data and statistics.

8. Since the Sustainable Development Goals have the explicit intention of being people-centred and improving lives, they must therefore take account of population dynamics. Knowing how many people are alive, where they live, how old they are and how those variables will change are prerequisites to understanding the characteristics of populations and thus meet their needs.

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[5] See E/2018/64, para. 20.

[6] See United Nations "The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2018" (New York, 2018), available at https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/files/report/2018/TheSustainableDevelopmentGoals Report2018-EN.pdf.

[7] World Bank, "Grow, Invest, Insure: a game plan to end extreme poverty by 2030", Policy Research Working Paper 7892 (November 2016), available at http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/924111479240600559/pdf/WPS7892.pdf.

B. Accelerating global actions towards decent work for all

9. Promoting sustainable, inclusive, sustained and equitable economic growth, including a shift towards a greener economy, is crucial in creating the estimated 600 million new jobs that need to be created by 2030 just to keep pace with the growth of the global working-age population. Furthermore, improving conditions for the 780 million working poor is also a priority if those workers are to lift themselves and their families out of $2-a-day poverty.

10. The experiences of successful countries show that the most important driver of poverty eradication is strong economic growth accompanied by increases in decent employment and in labour income, as well as reductions in informal employment. In 16 developing countries with significant reductions in poverty during the past decade, the combined effect of growth in employment and labour incomes accounted for more than 50 per cent of the poverty reduction.[8] Hence, creating decent jobs is one of the critical global actions that needs to be accelerated over the course of the Third Decade, in particular for young women and men. National policies should foster labour intensive growth in sectors such as agriculture, manufacturing and infrastructure development.

C. Promoting structural transformation through industrialization

11. The 2030 Agenda recognizes that accelerating inclusive and sustainable development through structural transformation can be a key driver of sustainable economic growth, job creation and poverty eradication, in particular in low-income, developing countries. Regions and countries that have successfully transformed their economies through industrialization have been able to significantly reduce poverty, especially when economic growth was both rapid and labour-intensive. Between 1990 and 2013, East Asian countries that had focused on industrialization were able to reduce the number of people living in extreme poverty from about 1 billion to 71 million.[9]

12. According to the 2030 Agenda, it is critical to support countries overcome such challenges as a lack of industrial capacity or technology and low productivity, and to attract investment. Furthermore, such global action requires assisting countries in developing and financing industrial infrastructure, such as industrial parks, transportation and trade logistics, and in developing policies, strategies and institutional and regulatory frameworks that facilitate market access, attract foreign direct investment, facilitate technology transfers and ensure environmental sustainability.

D. Supporting the rural farm and non-farm economy

13. The 2030 Agenda depends crucially on the transformation of rural areas, where most of the poor and hungry live. Two thirds of the extreme poor live in rural areas and depend on agriculture, fishing or forest resources for their livelihoods. Most of the people living in poverty have less access to: (a) productive resources; (b) basic services, such as health, education and social protection; (c) basic infrastructure, such as roads, water and electricity; and (d) off-farm employment. Furthermore, rural

[8] World Bank, "Is Labor Income Responsible for Poverty Reduction?", Policy Research Working Paper 6414 (April 2013), available at https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/15552/wps6414.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y.

[9] H. Haraguchi and K. Kitaoka, "Industrialization in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Development", in *Development*, vol. 58, iss. 4, pp. 452–462.

women and girls fare far worse on most development indicators and are more likely to be malnourished in all forms and more vulnerable to climate change.

14. One key area for action is therefore the support of the United Nations system to help many developing countries to foster rapid agricultural productivity growth and rural development. Investing in agriculture and related rural off-farm activities can foster inclusive economic growth. Key support to agriculture and rural development includes improving access to credit and markets, facilitating farm mechanization, revitalizing agricultural extension systems, strengthening land tenure rights, ensuring equity in supply contracts, strengthening small-scale producer organizations and, in particular, the formulation and implementation of gender-sensitive agricultural and rural development policies.

E. Enhancing national productive capacities for job growth and poverty eradication

15. In order to break the cycle of poverty and underdevelopment, it is necessary to identify those sectors with potential for both an immediate payoff in terms of job creation and the possibility of sustainable long-term growth. However, Governments, especially those in low-income countries, have limited resources and often lack the necessary abilities and thus need to prioritize productive capacity-enhancing policies to achieve sustained economic growth and long-term transformation and realize broader national development goals. Building productive capacities and achieving structural transformation consists of shifting resources and policy focus from traditional sectors and activities with low productivity and low technology, to new sectors and activities characterized by higher productivity and more sophisticated technology.

16. Many countries — in particular African countries, least developed countries and other vulnerable countries — are characterized by structurally weak economies with limited productive capacities that constrain their ability to produce efficiently. Building a critical mass of viable and competitive productive capacity in agriculture, manufacturing and services is therefore essential if those countries are to benefit from greater integration into the global economy, increase resilience to shocks, sustain inclusive and equitable growth and poverty eradication, achieve structural transformation and generate full and productive employment.

F. Implementing social protection floors based on national priorities

17. Despite the key role that social protection systems play in preventing and reducing poverty, vulnerability, inequality and social exclusion, the proportion of the population covered by social protection systems and floors remains low. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), only 45.2 per cent of the world's population is covered by at least one social protection benefit, while 29 per cent enjoy comprehensive social protection. That means that 55 per cent, or 4 billion people, have no social protection at all.

18. Huge regional differences also persist. Over 80 per cent of the population living in Africa has no social protection, compared with 16 per cent in Europe and Central Asia, 61 per cent in Asia and the Pacific and 32 per cent in the Americas. Significant coverage differences also exist across social groups. Only 41.1 per cent of mothers with newborns receive a maternity benefit, while 83 million new mothers remain uncovered. In total, 68 per cent of older persons receive old-age pensions worldwide, while only 35 per cent of children and 28 per cent of persons with disabilities are

protected.[10] Increasing coverage is therefore a global priority. The cost of providing the full set of benefits for the 57 low-income and lower-middle-income countries ranges from 0.3 to 9.8 per cent of GDP — with an average cost of 4.2 per cent of GDP.

G. Leveraging innovation and interconnectivity for employment creation and poverty eradication

19. The accelerating pace of innovation and interconnectivity will have an important impact on human progress and development, with the potential to contribute both to productivity growth and incomes, as well as to financial inclusion, health, education and the environment. However, given that technological change is often labour-saving, there are also growing concerns that technological innovation may lead to increased unemployment, suppressed wages and greater inequality. The United Nations system can help countries to formulate the right policy mix and institutional arrangements that can ensure that the benefits of innovation are shared broadly and contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.[11]

20. To better support Member States in the area of "frontier issues", the Secretary-General has called upon United Nations research and operational bodies to engage broadly with new technologies so that their benefits can be applied to accelerate the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and their risks can be mitigated. Through its normative and analytical work, the United Nations system is also focusing on how the new wave of technologies will shape labour markets and income distribution, and on the role of institutions and policies in place at the national and global levels. Attention is being paid on how the most vulnerable are affected by and can benefit from rapid technological developments and interconnectivity.

H. Investing in education, skills development and employment facilitation

21. Successful poverty eradication strategies focus on the expansion of education and of productive sectors. The expansion and transformation of productive sectors addresses the scarcity of decent jobs while the expansion of education ensures that there is a large enough educated labour force to meet the needs of those jobs. Hence, global actions to eradicate poverty should go hand in hand with education and skills development policies, with a strong focus on providing comprehensive primary through tertiary education for all. The progressive improvement of a skilled workforce is a closely-related feature of decent work for sustainable development, which in turn requires education and training systems that offer lifelong learning to the entire population. In that regard, the United Nations system is already working with Member States to ensure that every child receives a quality education that equips him or her for life. Priority is also being given to equipping young people with the skills needed for a rapidly changing labour market as well as opportunities for continued learning and vocational resources.

22. Through the Incheon Declaration, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) is leading and coordinating the Education 2030 Agenda and Framework for Action, with its partners providing support through

[10] ILO, "World Social Protection Report", available at www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_605078.pdf.

[11] Department of Economic and Social Affairs, "The impact of the technological revolution on labour markets and income distribution" (31 July 2017), available at www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/wp-content/uploads/sites/45/publication/2017_Aug_Frontier-Issues-1.pdf.

coordinated policy advice, technical assistance, capacity development and monitoring of progress at the global, regional and national levels.

I. Promoting universal health coverage, equitable access to quality health services

23. Good health is essential for sustained economic and social development and for poverty reduction. This requires universal health coverage, underpinned by a strong health system, that protects people from being pushed into poverty owing of the costs of health care. It is an investment to be nurtured, and the return on investment is compelling. About one quarter of full-income economic growth between 2000 and 2011 in low- and middle-income countries is estimated to be attributable to improvements in health. The health sector is also a growing source of jobs. Among OECD countries, employment in the health and social sectors grew by 48 per cent between 2000 and 2014, while jobs in industry and agriculture declined. Moreover, as 70 per cent of the global health workforce is female, creating jobs in the health sector is an investment in women's empowerment and gender equality. Furthermore, investments in strong, resilient health systems safeguard against health emergencies that can potentially have catastrophic social and economic consequences. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates show that, in 67 low- and middle-income countries, 85 per cent of the costs of reaching the health-related targets of the Sustainable Development Goals can be met with domestic resources, although 32 of the world's poorest countries will face significant resource gaps and will continue to need external assistance. Universal health coverage has therefore become a major goal for health reform in many countries and a priority objective of WHO and the United Nations.

J. Promoting durable solutions for and inclusion of displaced populations

24. Efforts to eradicate poverty should include promoting durable solutions for and inclusion of displaced populations. Globally, about 68.5 million people were forcibly displaced in 2017 due to conflict, persecution and violence.[12] The individual and collective cost of displacement is significant. Around 1.5 million refugee children are missing out on education, and 2 million refugee adolescents are not in secondary school.[13] Conflicts and their devastating impact on inclusive development and poverty eradication primarily affect developing countries. Low- and middle-income countries shoulder the responsibility of hosting refugees and displaced populations, placing significant stress on limited national fiscal space. At the individual level, refugees, internally displaced persons, returnees and stateless persons are invisible and hence not included in national development programmes and plans. Those groups also face legal barriers to gainful employment and have limited access to essential services.

25. In response, the United Nations system promotes voluntary repatriation, resettlement and local integration as part of durable solutions for refugees and internally displaced persons. Efforts are also being made to include those groups in national development plans.

[12] Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), "Global trends: Forced displacement in 2017" (Geneva 2018), available at www.unhcr.org/5b27be547.pdf.

[13] www.unhcr.org/59b696f44.pdf.

K. Accelerating actions to combat climate change and its impact

26. Frequent and severe climate change-induced threats and disasters, such as droughts, floods, rising sea levels and other extreme weather events, are increasingly undermining the attainment of the 2030 Agenda.[14] In 2017, weather-related disasters caused some $320 billion in economic damage, making the year the costliest ever for such losses.[15] The 2017 Atlantic hurricane season had a devastating social and economic impact, with decades of development set back. Similarly, monsoon floods affected 41 million people in South Asia in 2017, while nearly 900,000 people were affected by severe droughts in Africa.[16] Such disasters have a disproportionate impact on people living in poverty, especially those who rely on climate-sensitive activities, and affect women differently and disproportionately compared with men. Hence, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the 2030 Agenda have prioritized climate change mitigation and adaptation as critical elements for eradicating poverty. The United Nations system is at the forefront, pushing the implementation of the Paris Agreement as an integral part of its support to the Sustainable Development Goals. United Nations entities are working to increase the resilience of developing countries against the impacts of climate change.

L. Partnerships and resource mobilization for development

27. Partnerships and financing are critical for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. The United Nations has prioritized building the capacity of Member States to mobilize domestic resources, with an emphasis on tax reform, good governance and creating an enabling environment for investment and entrepreneurship.[17] Providing a conducive environment for efficient private-sector participation in the economy is critical. Long-standing commitments to official development assistance (ODA) are also an important source of income for many least developed countries. In 2017, ODA amounted $146.6 billion, representing a decrease of 0.6 per cent from 2016, partly due to less money being spent hosting and processing refugees within donor countries.[18] To scale-up poverty eradication efforts, ODA levels should be maintained or raised while debt relief efforts should be intensified. Deliberate efforts must also be made to encourage foreign direct investment in sectors such as manufacturing and activities that boost inclusive growth and employment creation. Greater efforts are also required to combat illicit financial flows, tax evasion and money-laundering.

IV. A system-wide plan of action for the Third United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (2018–2027)

28. The present section presents an inter-agency, system-wide plan of action to coordinate the efforts of the United Nations system.

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[14] https://unfccc.int/news/last-three-years-were-hottest-on-record-wmo.

[15] https://unfccc.int/news/damage-from-natural-disasters-almost-doubled-in-2017-compared-to-2016.

[16] https://unfccc.int/news/climate-chaos-to-continue-in-2018-un-secretary-general-warns.

[17] United Nations, *Financing for Development: Progress and Prospects 2018. Report of the Inter-agency Task Force on Financing for Development* (New York, 2018), available at https://developmentfinance.un.org/sites/developmentfinance.un.org/files/Report_IATF_2018.pdf.

[18] www.oecd.org/development/development-aid-stable-in-2017-with-more-sent-to-poorest-countries.htm.

A. Objectives

29. Although national policies are the primary means by which Member States address the scale and complexity of the challenge of eradicating poverty in all its forms everywhere, the United Nations system can provide important support to national authorities and civil society. Furthermore, by encouraging collective action on a global scale, a multiplier effect can accelerate progress towards poverty eradication in all countries. Given the range of poverty-focused actions already under way or planned by entities of the United Nations system, including as part of the integrated follow up to the 2030 Agenda, it is vital that the objectives of a system-wide plan for the Third Decade be carefully specified in terms of means of action as well as outcomes to maximize effectiveness and avoid duplication.

30. The plan of action for the Third Decade focuses on issues on which strengthened operational and policy integration by the United Nations system could yield improved support to Member States priorities and capacity to pursue institutional and policy coherence. In that regard, a focus is proposed on promoting collaboration across the United Nations system on policy issues where an integrated approach has most salience and that addresses key issues in transforming development processes. Experience with existing system-wide plans of action can inform the identification of key objectives and core principles for collaborative interagency action.

31. An overarching theme is the building of policy frameworks that accelerate investment in sustained poverty-reducing inclusive growth, through the transformation from low- to higher-productivity work. However, new issues will emerge over the course of the Decade and individual Member States may request integrated system-wide support on different topics reflecting their priorities.

32. As stressed repeatedly in the 2030 Agenda, transforming current growth paths is a necessary condition for achieving poverty eradication and all the other Sustainable Development Goals. Such transformation requires coherent and integrated policy frameworks nationally and internationally. The main operational objective of the system-wide plan of action for accelerating global actions for a world without poverty is to promote integrated programmes by the United Nations system that support Member States in moving development trajectories onto a sustained and sustainable path of poverty reducing growth. Such programmes make it possible to combine the different fields of expertise of the United Nations organizations so that the impact is multiplied. An example is the Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth, in which 23 United Nations organizations led by ILO formed a platform to catalyse partnerships, collaboration and coordination action grounded in evidence-based research.[19]

B. Setting the framework for integrated system-wide action to accelerate poverty eradication

1. Principles

33. The plan of action is founded on 10 basic principles that will guide the work of the United Nations system collectively and the individual contributions of system entities:

(a) Poverty is multi-dimensional in the forms it takes and its underlying causes, and new forms are emerging;

[19] www.decentjobsforyouth.org/.

(b) Integrated economic, social and environmental policies are needed nationally and internationally;

(c) Sustained and inclusive economic growth that narrows inequalities is necessary and entails structural transformation to generate full and productive employment and decent work for all;

(d) Respect for internationally recognized human rights is an essential foundation for action;

(e) Gender mainstreaming is vital for policy design and implementation;

(f) Discrimination, marginalization and exclusion are major causes of poverty and the barriers to the full participation in society and the economy of poor people and people in vulnerable situations, and must be removed;

(g) Inclusion and empowerment of those left behind is a priority, targeting those furthest behind;

(h) The role of the United Nations is to support nationally owned strategies and strengthen capacities for the realization of internationally agreed development goals and targets, including the Sustainable Development Goals, based on high-quality research and the promotion of good governance, human rights and the rule of law;

(i) The United Nations development system organizations will bring together their special expertise and policy portfolios to focus on integrated system-wide action that enhances efficiency, coherence, impact and adaptability to emerging trends;

(j) Inclusive and strategic partnerships based on these principles will pull together resources and deliver action globally, regionally, nationally and locally.

2. Means of action

34. In designing the plan of action, important lessons were drawn from past experience of policy integration and emerging plans, including the implementation of the 2030 Agenda to strengthen the means of action of the United Nations system. These include:

(a) **Joint research**. Evidence of the linkages between levels of educational attainment, health status and participation in productive employment can inform integrated strategies for health care, education and the transition from school to work. Similarly, studies of the poverty-reducing potential of "green jobs" can provide a solid basis for a shift towards environmentally sustainable development;

(b) **Monitoring and reporting on the indicators for poverty eradication-related Goals**. The plan of action will help Member States to monitor progress in implementing the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals;

(c) **Dissemination of information**. A system portal to gain access to information on research and integrated poverty eradication programmes and their impact will help Member States and United Nations organizations to realize more fully the potential of collaboration across policy fields. Organizations will also be encouraged to similarly establish a poverty eradication webpage on their own websites to group together information on their activities in support of the Third Decade;

(d) **Promoting integrated programmes**. In addition to promoting existing integrated programmes, the plan will build on research and experience to facilitate the identification of the scope for further integrated programmes and their development;

(e) **System focal points**. Nomination by each organization of a focal point to collaborate with counterparts on the implementation of the plan. This team of system focal points will be coordinated by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs;

(f) **Capacity-building**. Improved training on integrated policymaking and implementation for national officials and United Nations staff;

(g) **Incentivizing planning for integrated programmes**. The plan of action will incentivize collaborative work by entities of the United Nations system to implement integrated programmes.

3. Areas of policy focus

35. The plan of action has seven thematic policy areas that focus on actions that drive the structural transformations essential to sustained, inclusive and poverty-reducing growth.

(a) Structural transformation, productive employment and decent work in the context of a changing global scenario

36. Productive employment and decent work remains the basic and sustainable route out of poverty for individuals, communities and societies. Full and productive employment generates greater consumption and saving, which drive investment and thus sustained growth. Rising incomes enables the tax base to be enlarged so that public investments in human capacity and in the social and physical infrastructure, including in greening the economy, can be financed. However, underemployment, unemployment, informal work, poor-quality employment, vulnerable employment and working poverty remain major concerns in emerging and developing countries, dampening efforts to achieve poverty eradication.[20]

37. Profound changes in the world of work are being brought about by a wave of innovation in digital technologies, artificial intelligence and robotics which, coupled with the impact of demographic change and continuing globalization, are altering patterns of growth and development. The new wave of innovations has the potential to create new and better opportunities for employment. However, the gains from productivity growth are anticipated to be unequally distributed, with unskilled workers and groups on the margins of the labour market, such as women, least likely to benefit unless inclusive employment policies are strengthened. Hence, it is imperative for the United Nations system to support countries in preparing for these future realities through the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and by supporting public policies that foster societal learning and transformative structural changes. There is scope for the United Nations system to assist countries in facilitating the transition of workers from old to new jobs and share productivity gains from technological change equitably. The United Nations system should continue to advocate for greater functional and substantive policy coherence and an integrated approach to the promotion of decent work for all.

38. Within that overall picture of profound changes in the world of work, with mixed effects on the goal of poverty eradication, various entities of the United Nations system are contributing. The main means of action are research, advisory services, technical support and capacity-building based on knowledge products, international labour standards and other human rights instruments.

[20] ILO, *World Employment and Social Outlook: Trends 2018* (Geneva, 2018), available at www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_615594.pdf.

39. The plan of action will promote and support the integration of decent work and poverty eradication into national and international policies, strategies and programmes. It is essential for there to be a particular focus on those who risk being left behind, by implementing measures to formalize employment, introduce or strengthen minimum wages, guarantee respect for freedom of association and collective bargaining rights, combat all forms of discrimination in employment and end child and forced labour, including in agriculture and rural areas. Such measures will also help countries to harness the potential and mitigate the challenges of emerging technologies, and also to mitigate the challenges that the transition to low-carbon economies presents for employment, wage and income distribution, worker protections and social protection systems. The Partnership for Action on the Green Economy[21] and the Poverty-Environment Initiative[22] can offer valuable integrated support in this field.

40. The plan of action will aim to enhance national capacities to develop and implement strategies that give young women and men everywhere a real chance to find decent and productive work. The Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth is a system-wide partnership for the promotion of youth employment.[23] It will also help to build the productive capacity and decent work opportunities needed for economic transformation and to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals through the design and implementation of sectoral policies. The recently established "Working for Health" programme of WHO, ILO and OECD to accelerate progress towards universal health coverage, global health security and the 2030 Agenda through the expansion and transformation of the global health and social workforce is an important integrated programme in a key sector for poverty eradication.[24]

41. The plan of action will design and implement rural development and agricultural, fisheries and forestry policies that promote job creation in farm and off-farm sectors. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and ILO are active on those issues and have a long-standing cooperation agreement. The plan will also strengthen economic policies, including on trade, that lead to inclusive and sustainable industrialization for decent employment creation and poverty reduction. Furthermore, the plan will assess the linkages between demographic and economic changes, including the effects on labour markets and social protection systems.

(b) Expanding social protection systems to underpin inclusive, poverty-reducing development

42. Social protection systems are fundamental not only to lifting people out of poverty, but also in preventing them from falling back into poverty. They are a potent tool for the reduction of vulnerabilities across the life cycle, narrowing inequalities and fostering inclusive growth. Social protection is fundamental to the full attainment of economic and social rights for all, as recognized in a series of international legal instrument and ILO conventions and recommendations.

43. Social protection policies and programmes are especially critical for meeting the challenges posed by demographic changes. As the number of older persons continues to grow in many countries around the world, the need to guarantee their well-being and income security is increasingly urgent. Social protection systems also need to be expanded to ensure the protection of incomes and to facilitate access to health, education and decent employment, including for those in precarious and

[21] www.un-page.org/home.

[22] www.unpei.org/.

[23] www.decentjobsforyouth.org/.

[24] www.who.int/hrh/com-heeg/action-plan-annexes/en/.

informal employment. The contribution of social protection to gender equality is vital. Along with the provision of public care services and infrastructure, social protection systems can play a major role in redistributing care responsibilities and recognizing and valuing unpaid work.

44. Several United Nations organizations will work together to expand social protection systems and underpin sustainable poverty-eradicating development. An important vehicle for joint work is the United Nations-wide Social Protection Floor Initiative supported by the Joint Fund Window for Social Protection Floors.[25] Other cooperation platforms include: (a) the Social Protection Inter-Agency Cooperation Board, which promotes inter-agency coordination and advocacy on social protection issues, including in response to country demand-driven actions;[26] and (b) the Global Partnership for Universal Social Protection.[27] The main means of action are technical support, policy research, advice and advocacy, capacity development and training and expert meetings.

45. Action will focus on providing support to countries in implementing nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including floors, with the aim of achieving by 2030 substantial coverage of the poor and vulnerable. Within that field, the main focus is on those at risk of being left behind, including the rural poor, persons with disabilities and women workers in informal employment, who are typically low-paid and face low-quality jobs, widespread casualization and poor working conditions and lack a collective voice and agency as organized workers. Joint analytical work on building the economic case for scaling up social protection is envisaged. In that regard, the promotion of increased coherence between social protection and broad poverty reduction and development strategies will receive particular attention, for example, through agriculture and nutrition policies. Strengthening integrated social protection systems along the life cycle to meet the needs of older people and provide assistance to families that care for older family members is becoming an urgent issue in many countries.

(c) Human capability development: addressing non-income forms of poverty

46. Ending poverty is not just about people's income but also their access to basic needs, such as quality education and health care, clean water and sanitation, decent housing and security. Improved education and health will accelerate the achievement of all the Sustainable Development Goals. Breaking the vicious cycle of poor or no schooling, ill health and poverty-level incomes is essential for sustainable development. Eradicating income poverty also plays a critical role in improving health as poor people face substantial financial barriers to gaining access to the health services they need, and often face other cultural and social barriers when they do receive those services. In turn, good health plays a critical role in reducing poverty as it increases an individual's labour productivity, level of educational attainment and income. Similarly, improved education enables people to live healthier lives and learn new skills over their working life and thus earn higher incomes.

47. The overarching objective regarding non-income dimensions of poverty is to promote integrated approaches and policy frameworks to address multidimensional poverty. Several United Nations development system organizations have specialized mandates that address non-income dimensions of eradicating poverty. In addition, several partnership programmes are also available to support Member States. The International Health Partnership for Universal Health Coverage provides a

[25] www.social-protection.org/gimi/gess/ShowProject.action?id=2767.

[26] www.ilo.org/newyork/issues-at-work/social-protection/social-protection-inter-agency-cooperation-board/lang--en/index.htm.

[27] www.social-protection.org/gimi/gess/NewYork.action?id=34.

multi-stakeholder platform to promote collaborative working in countries and globally on health systems strengthening. The plan of action advocates for increased political commitment to universal health coverage and facilitates knowledge sharing.[28] Education 2030, led by UNESCO, also involves seven other United Nations bodies as well as many other civil society and intergovernmental organizations.[29] Its aim is to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all through the implementation of Goal 4, on inclusive and equitable quality education. The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, the United Nations Population Fund, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), WHO and the World Bank Group have formed the "H6 partnership" to support the implementation of "Every Woman, Every Child", the Global Strategy for Women's, Children's and Adolescents' Health 2016–2030, and reach the targets of the health-related Sustainable Development Goals.[30] The role of UN-Water is that of coordinator, to ensure the United Nations family "delivers as one" in response to water related challenges.[31]

(d) The future of food and sustainable agriculture

48. Sustainable agriculture plays a crucial role in ending poverty and achievement of almost all of the targets of the Sustainable Development Goals. The 2030 Agenda depends on the transformation of agriculture and rural areas, where most of the poor and hungry live. Since the 1990s, rural transformations have lifted more than 750 million rural people above the poverty line, but progress has been uneven.

49. Developments in agriculture have led to major improvements in productivity and to the ability to satisfy the demands of a growing global population, but this has not resulted in food and income security for all. In many countries, food production will still need to increase sharply to keep pace with an expanding population. To make rural transformation inclusive and make sure no one is left behind, the world will need to leverage the enormous untapped potential of food systems to drive agro-industrial development, boost small-scale farmers' productivity and incomes and create off-farm employment in expanding segments of food supply and value chains. National development strategies need to invest in people, especially the rural poor, who will be at the centre of the transition to sustainable agriculture and food systems.

50. Three major factors will influence whether rural transformation will be inclusive. First is the growing and changing demand from urban food markets, which consume up to 70 per cent of the food supply, even in countries with large rural populations. Second, in the coming years, many small-scale farmers are likely to leave agriculture, and most will be unable to find decent employment in largely low-productivity rural economies. Third, the physical, socioeconomic and political connections between small urban centres and their surrounding rural areas must be strengthened. Small cities and towns create greater opportunities for smallholder farmers to market their produce and serve as hubs for the expansion of the services sector.

51. This theme aims to enhance the capacity of countries to implement integrated programmes for inclusive rural development to overcome the challenges in eradicating extreme poverty and ending hunger and all forms of malnutrition. The plan of action will focus on those most at risk of being left behind by rural

[28] www.uhc2030.org.

[29] https://en.unesco.org/education2030-sdg4.

[30] www.everywomaneverychild.org/about/ewec-ecosystem/#sect6.

[31] www.unwater.org/.

transformation, for example, women and other marginalized populations, including indigenous persons.

52. Various entities of the United Nations system offer technical support and policy advice, capacity-building, research and analysis and advocacy. Partnerships with small farmer and rural workers' organizations and local authorities is a feature of action on integrated rural development by the United Nations system.

(e) Reducing inequalities

53. Inequality takes multiple forms and acts as a formidable barrier to poverty eradication and sustainable development. The negative impact of inequality, including gender inequality, on poverty emphasizes the importance of structural transformation that leads to inclusive and sustainable industrialization for employment creation and poverty reduction. Poverty reduction, especially to reach the furthest behind first, requires equality-oriented policies. Inequalities include, but transcend, income inequality and originate from the uneven exercise of rights, unequal access to opportunities and capacity development and thus unequal results. Promoting greater equality not only helps to safeguard the economic, social and cultural rights of all women and men, girls and boys, but also fosters growth, development and greater social cohesion. The 2030 Agenda reflects a consensus on the need to move towards more egalitarian, cohesive and solidarity-based societies and inclusive economic growth.

54. The plan of action will combat the multiple and intersecting manifestations of inequality, such as socio-economic status, gender, territory, ethnicity/race, age, disability status and life cycle, as they relate to access to education, health, economic resources (including land), social protection, employment, cultural life, participation in decision-making at all levels (household, community and national) and other dimensions considered relevant in the national context. It will further the analysis of the multiple dimensions of inequality and its linkages with the economic, social and environmental pillars of sustainable development as well as the linkages between income inequality, poverty and economic growth. One particular area of focus is enhancing women's economic empowerment, in particular rural women. Reducing inequities in access to health services and in health status, as well as access to education, is also key.

55. Various entities of the United Nations system plan to be active on this theme. One important means of combating inequalities is to introduce integrated, inclusive approaches on issues such as health, education and rural development, for example by using gender analysis or policy dialogue with civil society groups. Research on the causes of different forms of inequality and the impact of policies aimed at reducing inequalities is vital to the development of impactful programmes.

(f) Addressing climate change and the intensification of natural hazards

56. Climate change and natural hazards can be enormously costly — both economic and in terms of human lives — on sustainable development and risk, and they exacerbate many dimensions of poverty and inequality. These challenges need to be addressed through measures of mitigation and prevention to tackle climate change and natural hazards directly. It is essential to ensure that climate change does not significantly set back poverty eradication, in particular through its impact on households with natural resource-based livelihoods, women, children, young people and other vulnerable and marginalized groups. Measures of mitigation, adaptation and disaster risk reduction can also contribute significantly to poverty eradication. It is therefore important to integrate climate change mitigation and adaption and disaster risk reduction across United Nations system efforts in support of the poverty

eradication-related internationally agreed development goals, including the Sustainable Development Goals, and climate justice.

57. Under this theme, United Nations organizations will aim to strengthen the capacity of countries to build resilience to protracted crises, disasters and extreme climate events. They will enable the development and support the implementation of integrated policy approaches, including social protection, to mitigate and adapt to climate change at the national and international levels. A key issue for action is the reduction of the exposure and vulnerability to disasters of poor people, especially those who live in rural areas and depend on natural resources.

58. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), WHO, ILO, FAO, the World Food Programme (WFP), UN-Women, UNESCO and the regional commissions are collaborating on this theme, offering research and analysis, policy advice, technical support, capacity-building and training. The promotion of coherence between poverty eradication and climate change policies is a major focus of this work, making full use of the UNDP-UNEP Poverty-Environment Action Initiative.[32]

(g) Fighting poverty in fragile and humanitarian contexts

59. The 2030 Agenda commits countries to building the resilience of people living in poverty and those in vulnerable situations and reducing their exposure and vulnerability to climate-related extreme events and other economic, social and environmental shocks and disasters. Such shocks not only provoke immediate humanitarian needs for food, shelter and medical care, but also can severely set back poverty eradication in the longer term, not least by increasing all aspects of fragility and preventing access to safe, nutritious and sufficient food at all times of the year for all. Ending poverty and hunger in countries in special situations and in protracted crisis presents specific challenges that need to be addressed, related to insufficient or degraded natural resources, as well as logistics hurdles to ensure access to food and conflict. Integrated, nationally driven and country-specific policies and programmes supported by inclusive, multi-stakeholder governance mechanisms, partnerships and international cooperation are critically important.

60. An overarching objective of action in many humanitarian contexts is to address the root causes of fragility, conflict and social and economic instability by promoting policy and practical solutions, investing in the human potential of vulnerable and marginalized people by upgrading their skills and through the transfer of knowledge and technologies, thereby creating stable employment and income opportunities. A key issue for fighting poverty in crisis situations is providing support to internally displaced persons and refugees to secure better access to livelihood opportunities, finance, adequate housing with security of tenure and basic services, including social assistance. It is equally important to support host communities by strengthening income-generating opportunities and risk management interventions, including through social protection and in a gender responsive manner. The plan of action on this theme will aim to strengthen the capacity of countries to prevent, prepare for and respond to the immediate needs of crisis-affected populations for food, health care, shelter and jobs.

61. The United Nations organizations that contribute to tackling poverty in fragile and humanitarian contexts include WFP, FAO, WHO, UNICEF, ILO, UN Habitat, UNDP, UNESCO and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization. A key cooperation body is the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, which serves as the

[32] www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/ourwork/global-policy-centres/sustainable_landmanagement/pei.html.

primary mechanism for inter-agency coordination relating to humanitarian assistance in response to complex and major emergencies.[33] Actions during the Third Decade will focus on building capacity to prevent or mitigate crisis situations and the damage they do to poverty eradication, through policy advice, training and research.

4. Modalities of delivery: building momentum, tracking progress, learning lessons, identifying emerging issues and adapting actions

62. Eradicating poverty in all its manifestations and achieving all the ambitious targets of the 2030 Agenda will require a major global drive by multi-actor coalitions, alliances and partnerships to set in motion the necessary economic, social and environmental transformations. The Decade should therefore be a 10-year rolling campaign by the United Nations system to demonstrate that, despite the daunting scale of the challenge of ending poverty, an inclusive, fair and sustainable future is possible through determined collective action by Member States, with the support of the United Nations development system. Every 17 October, the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty provides a focus for the campaign.

63. A central feature of system-wide action is therefore a strategy that enables the rich knowledge and expertise dispersed around the United Nations system to be brought together and focused on practical, integrated policies to support similarly coherent efforts by Member States. An impressive amount of information on poverty in all its forms and the policies to attack it is already available on the websites of United Nations organizations. A portal at the United Nations system level will help Member States, the United Nations system itself and the public at large to navigate access to this invaluable resource and promote integrated system-wide programmes. The portal will also help to identify further scope for integrated action by the United Nations system in successive programming cycles to 2027.

64. Strengthening the capacity of countries for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda will require timely, systematic, appropriate and high-quality statistical information. Many countries report significant limitations in producing relevant, accurate and comparable disaggregated data. Building on the United Nations-wide effort to improve data sources as part of implementation of the 2030 Agenda, the plan of action will therefore work to strengthen national statistical capacity and monitoring systems to ensure the availability of multidimensional data on poverty. The goal is to have data that is high quality, accessible, timely, reliable and disaggregated by income, sex, age, race, ethnicity, migration status, disability and geographic location and other characteristics relevant to national contexts.

65. The plan of action will make full use of the indicators of the Sustainable Development Goals to track progress on the eradication of poverty in all its forms everywhere. A progress report on the plan of action based on an analysis of the trends revealed by the poverty-related indicators will be prepared every two years.

66. The plan of action will also promote joint research and analysis by United Nations organizations on the linkages between different forms of poverty. Such research will make it possible to identify the emerging issues in poverty eradication, such as the impact of technological change on development patterns and appropriate policy responses.

67. Policy-oriented research will aim to support the capacity of Member States to develop and implement integrated strategies for poverty eradication, not least in budget planning mechanisms and programme design.

[33] https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/.

68. Integrated policymaking and implementation will require officials of the United Nations and its Member States to enhance their skills. The plan of action will therefore work with United Nations training institutions to develop training modules for incorporation into staff development programmes.

69. United Nations organizations will nominate focal points for the Decade to serve on an online consultation forum facilitated by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs to manage activities under the Decade. Every two years, the content of the plan of action will be reviewed to assess the learn lessons and, if needed, adapt the means of action and themes of policy focus to the emerging trends and changing priorities.

70. The General Assembly is invited to review and offer guidance on this outline of the system-wide plan of action on accelerating global actions for a world without poverty for the Third Decade.

V. Recommendations on making the Third Decade effective

71. **To ensure that the Third United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (2018–2027) provides an effective framework for promoting and supporting poverty eradication efforts, Member States may wish to consider the following recommendations that can be taken at the global, regional and national levels:**

(a) **The General Assembly, as the only global body that can speak with a global voice to all stakeholders on the overarching objective of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, should dedicate an agenda item to the eradication of poverty framed within the context of the Third Decade, to help foster global dialogue, to provide a platform for global stocktaking, to track and evaluate progress, to draw lessons from successful actions and to identify those who need greater attention. Effective monitoring and evaluation mechanisms for national plans are essential to ensuring that policies have the desired impact;**

(b) **At the global level, the United Nations system should make the Third Decade effective through the advocacy and implementation mechanisms of the Sustainable Development Goals, including the high-level political forum on sustainable development and the system-wide plan of action for the eradication of poverty;**[34]

(c) **At the regional level, the United Nations system should build on and strengthen existing regional coordination through the regional commissions and other regional mechanisms, enhance regional cooperation and harmonize the 2030 Agenda with regional and subregional development frameworks that have already been adopted;**

(d) **At the national level, the United Nations system can make the Third Decade effective through the United Nations Development Assistance Framework. Its support to countries to address poverty should be enhanced by improving the quality of policy research and knowledge products; improving the quality of technical assistance and strengthening national capacities; and the continued strengthening of its capacity to provide relevant and effective national policy advice on promoting integrated strategies for poverty eradication, including the integration of the Sustainable Development Goals into national plans and governance structures and prioritization and sequencing of actions;**

[34] United Nations Development Group, "Fulfilling the promises: a practical guide for UN advocacy to promote implementation of the 2030 agenda" (2017).

(e) **Relevant organizations of the United Nations should implement the objectives of the Decade through advisory and programmatic support to Member States. Within the framework of the plan of action, the United Nations system should promote the sharing of experiences and peer learning among countries and showcase innovative approaches and strategies in different regional and national circumstances. It should also address new and emerging issues that undermine poverty eradication efforts;**

(f) **Member States and their development partners should continue to build the political will and high-level advocacy necessary for the formulation, financing and implementation of national policies that boost inclusive growth, expand opportunities and social protection coverage to all segments of society and protect the planet;**

(g) **Gender perspectives should be mainstreamed across efforts to eradicate poverty and support and enhance the participation of young women and men and other underrepresented groups in national development activities;**

(h) **The relevant entities of the United Nations development system should implement joint programming at the country and local levels to promote system-wide coherence and harmonization and reduce duplication and fragmentation;**

(i) **Member States should deepen genuine, inclusive and meaningful partnerships and cooperation with civil society organizations, non-governmental organizations, the private sector and philanthropic organizations to contribute to implementing the Sustainable Development Goals.**

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Item 74 (c) of the provisional agenda*
Promotion and protection of human rights: human rights situations and reports of special rapporteurs and representatives

Situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran**

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 72/189, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report to it at its seventy-third session on the progress made in the implementation of the resolution. Patterns and trends in the human rights situation in the Islamic Republic of Iran and recommendations to improve the implementation of the resolution are presented in the report.

* A/73/150.

** The present report was submitted after the deadline so as to include the most recent information.

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I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 72/189, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report to it at its seventy-third session. The report provides information on progress made in the implementation of the resolution and draws on observations made by the United Nations human rights treaty bodies, the special procedures of the Human Rights Council and various United Nations entities. It also draws on information from State media and official sources of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and non-governmental organizations.

2. The Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran has continued to engage with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the United Nations treaty bodies, and has responded to a number of communications from the special procedures of the Human Rights Council.

3. Since the issuance of the previous report of the Secretary-General, to the Human Rights Council at its thirty-seventh session (A/HRC/37/24), the Government has begun to implement an amendment to the drug-trafficking law which retroactively abolishes the mandatory death penalty for some drug-related offences. Notwithstanding the positive steps, following increasing widespread protests the human rights situation has been marked by an intensified crackdown on protesters, journalists and social media users. The application of the death penalty, including for juvenile offenders, has continued at a high rate. Reports of torture, arbitrary detention and trials that failed to adhere to international standards have been received, as has information on persistent discrimination against women and girls, as well as members of minority groups.

II. Overview of the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran

A. Death penalty

Use of the death penalty

4. According to article 6 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, States parties that have not yet abolished the death penalty should only impose it for the "most serious crimes", which has consistently been interpreted as meaning intentional killing.[1] Information received by OHCHR indicates that from January to May 2018, 78 persons were executed in the Islamic Republic of Iran. The Secretary-General remains concerned by the continued application of the death penalty to a wide range of offences, including those of vague or uncertain scope, such as "spreading corruption on earth", and those that do not implicate intentional killing and therefore do not amount to the "most serious crimes."

5. The Islamic Republic of Iran is a party to both the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which both prohibit the execution of juvenile offenders, without exception. The Islamic Penal Code retains the death penalty for boys of at least 15 lunar years and girls of at least 9 lunar years for *qisas* (retribution in kind) or *hudud* crimes, such as homicide and

[1] The Human Rights Committee, the authoritative interpretative body under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, has established significant jurisprudence interpreting the "most serious crimes". See para. 39 of draft general comment No. 36 on article 6 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, on the right to life, available at https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/CCPR/GCArticle6/GCArticle6_EN.pdf.

adultery, in contravention of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

6. The Secretary-General is alarmed by the continued execution of juvenile offenders. In 2018, Mahboubeh Mofidi, Amir Pourjafar, Ali Kazemi and Abolfazi Sharahi, aged between 14 and 16 years old at the time of their alleged commission of a crime, were executed. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights issued statements calling for the halting of the executions in February[2] and June 2018.[3]

7. In its submission to the Committee on the Rights of the Child for its most recent review, in 2016, the Government highlighted an amendment to the Penal Code in 2013 (article 91) that allowed judges to pronounce alternative sentences for juvenile offenders if there was uncertainty about their mental development at the time of the crime, or if they had not realized the nature of the crime committed (see CRC/C/IRN/Q/3-4/Add.1, paras. 30–31).

8. This amendment notwithstanding, sentencing to death and executions of juvenile offenders have continued. The Committee on the Rights of the Child expressed serious concern that the alternative sentences were subject to the full discretion of judges, who were allowed but not mandated to seek forensic expert opinion (see CRC/C/IRN/CO/3-4, para. 35). In some cases, the alternative sentences were overturned on appeal and a death penalty sentence was subsequently handed down. For instance, Mohammad Kalhori was 15 years old at the time of his alleged commission of a crime. During his trial at the court of first instance, the assessment of the State forensic institution attested that he was not mentally mature at the time of the alleged crime, and subsequently he was sentenced to a term of imprisonment. However, following an appeal and letters by public officials, the Supreme Court overturned the sentence and he was sentenced to death during a retrial.[4]

9. The Secretary-General expresses deep concern at the continued sentencing of juveniles to death and the situation of juvenile offenders on death row, in particular Mohammad Kalhori, Mehdi Khazaeian, Mohammad Haddadi and Pouria Tabaei, following reports suggesting that their executions could be imminent. In comments provided on the present report, the Government noted that Mr. Kalhori's sentence had been upheld by the Supreme Court on 6 March, that Mr. Khazaeian's sentence had similarly been upheld pending confirmation from the Head of the Judiciary and that Mr. Haddadi's execution had been suspended by the Head of the Judiciary. The Secretary-General reiterates the call of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in his statement of 28 June 2018 for the death sentences of all those subjected to the death penalty for crimes committed when they were under 18 years of age to be commuted in line with international law.[5]

10. The Secretary-General is further concerned by the treatment of those persons on death row who have repeatedly been informed that they will be executed imminently. Mr. Sharahi was repeatedly moved into solitary confinement in preparation for his imminent execution. This occurred four times before his execution. In his statement of 28 June 2018, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights noted

[2] Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), "Zeid urges Iran to stop violating international law by executing juvenile offenders", 16 February 2018.
[3] OHCHR, "Zeid appalled by execution of juvenile offenders in Iran", 28 June 2018.
[4] OHCHR, "United Nations experts urge Iran to halt 'unlawful execution' of young offender", 19 June 2018.
[5] OHCHR, "Zeid urges Iran to stop violating international law by executing juvenile offenders".

that, inter alia, this treatment may amount to torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.[6]

11. Insufficient information on the timing of executions imposes a continuous anticipation of imminent death resulting in acute mental distress, not only for the convicted person but also for the person's family.[7] In this regard, a worrying trend has been observed of executions being implemented at short notice. In the case of Mr. Sharahi, his family was informed the day before his execution (see A/HRC/30/18, para. 54). Furthermore, the lack of reliable information on the timing of executions is a serious impediment to scrutiny by the international human rights system. The lack of transparency and late notice of executions underlines a broader concern about the lack of transparency in relation to individuals facing the death penalty, contrary to States' obligations (ibid., paras. 53, 54 and 58). According to information received by OHCHR, at least 85 individuals were on death row as at 1 July 2018.

12. In 2018 to date, the majority of executions were carried out following conviction for murder, referred to as *qisas*. All juvenile offenders executed in 2018 were sentenced to death pursuant to *qisas*. In such cases, the family of the victim can choose the punishment imposed, forgive the defendant or request a payment (*diya*) as compensation. The Government stated that it generally sought to "encourage reconciliation by helping the convict to pay *diya*".[8] However, *qisas* often violates the right of defendants to due process in sentencing procedures, especially in the light of mitigating circumstances, such as the age of the alleged offender, as well as the alleged offender's right to seek pardon or commutation,[9] because the pardon does not rest with the State, but with the victim's family. Notwithstanding the efforts undertaken by the authorities, the Secretary-General stresses that the State should not delegate such responsibility.

Right to a fair trial

13. In a number of cases brought to the attention of OHCHR, death sentences were handed down and/or implemented following proceedings that did not comply with fair trial and due process safeguards. The imposition of a death sentence upon the conclusion of a trial in which the provisions of article 14 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights have not been respected constitutes a violation of the right to life.[10] Successive reports of the Secretary-General have documented such a pattern in cases concerning juvenile offenders, dual and foreign nationals, political prisoners and minorities (see A/HRC/37/24 and A/72/562). In its midterm report on the universal periodic review, the Government stated that the process for the issuance of death sentences included a preliminary verdict, referral to an appeals court, referral to the Supreme Court and review by the Chief Justice, with retrials ordered under certain conditions.[11]

14. A further recurring feature of unfair trials relates to the restriction of access to a lawyer of the defendant's choosing during the investigative phase, in contravention of article 35 of the Constitution and the International Covenant on Civil and Political

[6] Ibid.

[7] See Human Rights Committee, *Schedko v. Belarus* (CCPR/C/77/D/886/1999), para. 10.2; and *Staselovich v. Belarus* (CCPR/C/77/D/887/1999), para. 9.2.

[8] See Islamic Republic of Iran, High Council for Human Rights, *UPR midterm* report (2015–2016) (Center for the Judiciary), p. 110. Available at https://lib.ohchr.org/HRBodies/UPR/Documents/Session20/IR/Iran2ndCycle.pdf.

[9] See International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, art. 6 (4).

[10] See Human Rights Committee, general comment No. 32 (2007) on the right to equality before courts and tribunals and to a fair trial, para. 59; and *Shukurova v. Tajikistan* (CCPR/C/86/D/1044/2002).

[11] See Islamic Republic of Iran, *UPR midterm report* (2015–2016), p. 146.

Rights. According to article 48 of the Penal Code, individuals accused of crimes against external or internal security are required to select their counsel from a list approved by the Head of the Judiciary during the investigative phase, which is often the phase during which confessions are obtained. While article 48 entered into force in June 2015, the list of approved lawyers was only made available in June 2018. In Tehran, 20 lawyers were included in the list out of the 20,000 members of the Tehran Bar Association.

15. The Secretary-General is further concerned by death sentences passed on the basis of *Qesameh*, or "collective oath", that when other facts exist to create a doubt of innocence according to the judge, the judge can use the absence of sufficient evidence to convict a defendant of murder.[12] In such cases, the deceased's next of kin can introduce 50 family members to the Court to swear that the defendant had committed the crime — even if they did not witness the crime — which then leads to conviction. In October 2017, a man who had claimed to be innocent was executed following his conviction on the basis of *Qesameh*, and at least one juvenile offender, Saleh Shariati, was sentenced to death according to *qisas*, following application of the procedure. At the time of reporting, his case was being considered by the Supreme Court. The Secretary-General recalls that the presumption of innocence, as guaranteed by article 14 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, is fundamental to the protection of human rights and imposes on the prosecution the burden of proving the charge on the basis of evidence beyond reasonable doubt.[13]

Amendment to the drug-trafficking law

16. In November 2017, an amendment to the drug-trafficking law entered into force, which abolished the mandatory death penalty (retroactively and prospectively) for some drug-related offences in certain circumstances, replacing it with a prison term of up to 30 years. The amendment also increased the quantity of drugs required to impose a death sentence while retaining mandatory death sentences for numerous drug-related offences.

17. In his previous report, the Secretary-General welcomed the amendment (see A/HRC/37/24, para. 12). He notes that since the amendment entered into force, one report of an execution for drug-related offences has been received (in May 2018), compared with the reported executions of 231 persons for drug-related offences in 2017. The Secretary-General believes that greater public transparency on death penalty cases would assist in better assessing the impact of the amendment. United Nations human rights mechanisms have stated consistently that drug-related offences do not meet the threshold of the "most serious crimes".[14]

18. The judiciary was subsequently instructed to review the cases of those already sentenced to death for drug-related offences.[15] In July 2018, the Prosecutor of Tehran reportedly stated that 3,300 individuals sentenced to death or life imprisonment for drug-related offences had filed appeals under the amendment, and 1,700 cases had been reviewed to date. He further stated that most individuals had had their sentences amended to imprisonment following review. While this is encouraging news, concerns related to the lack of independent supervision of the review have been compounded by a reported lack of capacity of the judiciary to deal with the high

[12] See arts. 312–346 of the Islamic Penal Code.

[13] See Human Rights Committee, general comment No. 32 (2007), para. 30.

[14] See International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, art. 6 (2); CCPR/C/PAK/CO/1, para. 17; CCPR/C/THA/CO/2, para. 17; CCPR/C/KWT/CO/3, para. 22; A/71/372, para. 48; and A/HRC/21/29 and A/HRC/21/29/Corr.1, para. 24.

[15] See A/HRC/37/24, paras. 10–14; and Islamic Republic of Iran, "Circular by the Head of the Judiciary on the implementation of the new amendment to the Anti-Narcotics Law", 6 January 2018.

number of eligible pending cases and the lack of criteria to determine how cases are prioritized. There is also limited clarity on the legal assistance provided to those eligible for review. Furthermore, the sentences of some prisoners have been commuted to a standard sentence of 30 years and a fine, irrespective of the circumstances of the crime. In addition, information received by OHCHR suggests that there is no opportunity to appeal against the outcome of the review.[16] Pending the prohibition of the use of the death penalty for drug-related crimes, the Secretary-General encourages the Government to address these concerns to ensure effective legal representation for all those who have filed for review and to adhere to the principles of transparency and due process.

B. Torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment

19. OHCHR continued to receive numerous reports of floggings carried out in 2018, and one report of an amputation in January in Mashhad. Such practices remain prescribed as punishments for *hudud* offences under the Penal Code despite being considered by the Human Rights Committee as incompatible with article 7 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. On 30 May, comments attributed to the Deputy Chancellor of the Judiciary praised such punishments as "much more effective" than imprisonment. The Secretary-General recalls that such punishments violate the absolute prohibition of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment (see CCPR/C/79/Add.85, para. 9).

20. The Secretary-General has serious concerns about persistent reports of torture and ill-treatment in various places of detention and prisons. These reports describe beatings, denial of medical care and the use of torture or duress to coerce confessions. In its midterm report on the universal periodic review, the Government highlighted new measures put in place to ensure the health of prisoners and stated that any form of torture to acquire confession or information was forbidden, in line with article 38 of the Constitution, and that any complaint would be investigated immediately.[17]

21. Concerning reports also continue to be received about the conditions of detention in a number of facilities, including Shahr-e Rey prison (also known as Gharchak Women's Prison) and Raja'i Shahr prison, which fall short of the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (the Nelson Mandela Rules). Conditions at Raja'i Shahr prison received attention following the internal transfer of a number of political prisoners in August 2017 and their subsequent hunger strike protest.[18]

C. Restrictions on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly, association, expression and opinion and to privacy

Freedom of peaceful assembly

22. According to information published by the Ministry of the Interior, some 43,000 demonstrations have been held across the Islamic Republic of Iran since 2013.[19] On 28 December 2017, large-scale protests began in the cities of Mashhad and Neyshabur

[16] Iran Human Rights, "Iran execution trends six months after the new Anti-Narcotics Law", 29 May 2018.

[17] See Islamic Republic of Iran, *UPR mid-term report* (2015–2016), p. 157.

[18] OHCHR, "United Nations expert concerned at condition of prisoners on hunger strike in Iran", 31 August 2017.

[19] See https://www.hra-news.org/2018/hranews/a-13792/.

before spreading across the country. The Minister of the Interior, Abdolreza Rahmani Fazli, reportedly stated that "about 100 cities witnessed protests, 42 of which experienced violence", including small towns and villages, and that demonstrations were estimated to have involved between 40,000 and 45,000 individuals.[20]

23. According to reports, popular discontent was fuelled, inter alia, by falling living standards, high inflation, widespread unemployment and perceived corruption of public officials. The publication of the government budget on 10 December 2017 had raised further concerns in relation to the allocation of public resources. In an interview, the Deputy Interior Minister for Security Affairs indicated that 90 per cent of demonstrators arrested during the protests of January 2018 were under the age of 25 years and had no criminal record.[21] According to civil society and academics, inequalities, marginalization, underinvestment and lack of access to public services in the border regions and provinces also fuelled the socioeconomic grievances of ethnic and religious minorities. In comments provided on the present report, the Government highlighted efforts to identify regional and local potential and enhance local capacities through the implementation of its sixth five-year development plan, the establishment of territorial plans for each province, engagement with Islamic councils in cities and villages and measures to facilitate free trade in border regions. The Government further noted that unilateral coercive measures constituted an impediment to economic development and highlighted their negative impact on the enjoyment of the rights to food, education, health and adequate housing, affecting all Iranians.

24. On 25 June 2018, the Government announced a ban on the import of some 1,339 products in anticipation of the reimposition of sanctions following the announcement by the United States of America of its withdrawal from Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. The same day, traders in the Grand Bazaar in Tehran protested in response to the high inflation and the collapse of the national currency, the rial, by nearly 50 per cent in the unofficial market since the end of 2017. In a media interview, a parliamentarian indicated that 129 people had allegedly been arrested in the context of the demonstrations.[22] On 26 June, the Head of the Judiciary, Sadeq Larijani, stated that "these actions against the country's economic order are punishable by execution — if found to be on the level of 'corruption on earth' — or up to 20 years in prison and the confiscation of all possessions".[23]

Arrest and detention of protestors

25. OHCHR received reports of unlawful arrests, including instances of individuals detained as a means of inducing their relatives involved in demonstrations to surrender themselves to the authorities. On 1 January 2018, the judiciary called for a "strong approach from all prosecutors" in dealing with protesters. On 3 January, the head of the Tehran Revolutionary Court, Mousa Ghazanfar Abadi, threatened that protest leaders and organizers could be charged with *moharebeh*, or "enmity against God", a crime punishable by the death penalty.[24] Official news channels confirmed the arrest of around 4,970 individuals during the demonstrations in December 2017 and January 2018.[25] Members of the parliament stated that the majority of students

[20] See http://iran-newspaper.com/newspaper/item/461105.

[21] See https://www.radiofarda.com/a/28950074.html.

[22] Islamic Republic News Agency, "About 130 people arrested in illegal gatherings: MP", 1 July 2018.

[23] Radio Farda, "Prosecutor says 'a large number' of protesters arrested, threatens others", 28 June 2018.

[24] Najmeh Bozorgmehr, "Iran street protests curbed, says minister", *Financial Times*, 2 January 2018.

[25] See https://tinyurl.com/ya6gp22q.

who were arrested — some 90 students according to reports[26] — had been taken in front of their homes or university campuses to prevent further mobilization.[27] In an interview with the official Mizan news agency, the chief prosecutor of Tehran Province, Gholam Esmaili, stated that around 100 individuals had been indicted in connection with the protests.[28] In comments provided on the present report, the Government stated that the response by law enforcement officials had been proportionate and in response to the level of damage to State facilities and violence against law enforcement officers. According to the Government, 338 police officers had been injured and one killed during the protests.

26. Some individuals arrested during the January protests were reportedly interrogated and held for extended periods of time without legal representation. In some cases, detainees were transferred to unknown locations while their families were pressured not to engage with the media. According to information received by OHCHR, detained protesters have reportedly been indicted on vague charges, including *moharebeh*. Some protesters received sentences ranging from a few months to several years, following trial procedures that raised serious concerns about their adherence to international standards on due process and fair trial. In its comments on the present report, the Government stated that "a handful of individuals" had been arrested by police forces, 80 per cent of whom had been released the same day and 15 per cent a few days after. It further stated that those arrested on charges of killing or destruction of public property had been handed over to the judiciary.

27. The spokesperson of the judiciary reported that 25 people, including children and two security officers, had been killed during the protests.[29] At the time of reporting, OHCHR had not received information confirming that an independent investigation into the reported deaths of protesters had been launched. Moreover, families were not allowed to access the bodies of their family members or to hold memorial ceremonies.

28. At least five people arrested in connection with the protests of January 2018 were reported to have died while in custody, including cases from Tehran (Evin prison), Arak, Ilam and Sanandaj. The authorities claimed that some of those who died had been arrested on charges of possession of narcotics or collusion with dissident groups, and that all the deaths were suicides, contrary to reports or statements, including by officials,[30] suggesting that ill-treatment or forced administration of substances might have contributed to the deaths. Limited information was provided by the judicial authorities on the circumstances of the deaths, and reports indicated that families of some of the deceased had been pressured not to discuss their cases publicly. Some families made statements on television attesting to the fact that their loved ones had committed suicide.[31]

29. In a positive development, on 30 January a parliamentary delegation visited Evin prison following the allegations of the deaths and ill-treatment of protesters in detention.[32] On 14 February, the President, Hassan Rouhani, ordered an investigation into the allegations[33] by a committee comprising the Ministries of the Interior, Justice

[26] See https://goo.gl/mv5eMs.
[27] See https://goo.gl/RuDwYS.
[28] See http://www.mizanonline.com/fa/news/415140/.
[29] See https://www.radiofarda.com/a/iran_judiciary_mohseni_ezhei_protests/28974896.html.
[30] See https://goo.gl/mb7kJf.
[31] See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=okHJomtg3uQ.
[32] See https://ilnanews.com/fa/tiny/news-588932.
[33] See http://www.ilna.ir/fa/tiny/news-593743.

and Intelligence.[14] As at 1 July, the results of the investigation have yet to be made public.

30. The Secretary-General is concerned about the fate of individuals who have been arrested in conjunction with the protests and who remain in custody. The Secretary-General urges the Government to ensure that the rights of all people in detention are respected and protected, and that information is made available on their location and status, in particular to their families. The Secretary-General further calls upon the Government to ensure that families are offered the possibility to seek an independent investigation into the circumstances and cause of deaths in custody. The Secretary-General notes the position of the Government in its comments that "it has always responded to the legitimate demands of its citizens, including the right to participate in political and social affairs, security and the right to peaceful assembly". The Secretary-General calls upon the Government to end widespread and serious restrictions, in law and in practice, on the right to freedom of expression, opinion, association and peaceful assembly, in line with General Assembly resolution 72/189, and also calls for the immediate and unconditional release of all those arrested for the legitimate exercise of these rights.

Rights to freedom of expression, association and opinion and to privacy

31. According to article 33 of the Charter on Citizens' Rights, "citizens have the right to freely and without discrimination enjoy access to and communicate and obtain information and knowledge from cyberspace".[15] In its comments on the present report, the Government noted the importance of information and communications technology and infrastructure development to enhance efficiency and bridge the technology gap with rural areas.

32. In January 2018, there were a reported 57 million Internet users in the Islamic Republic of Iran.[16] With over 40 million registered users, the messaging application Telegram became a key vehicle for communication in the country, including during the protests. It has since been subjected to significant restrictions. On 31 December 2017, the Supreme National Security Council temporarily blocked several platforms, including Telegram, in contravention of the country's Computer Crimes Law, which requires a decision by the multi-stakeholder Supreme Council of Cyberspace. In response, the Chief Executive Officer of Telegram posted on social media: "Iranian authorities are blocking access to Telegram ... after our public refusal to shut down ... other peacefully protesting channels".[17] On 9 January, eight Telegram administrators were arrested in the city of Kerman for the reports on demonstrations on their channels.

33. On 30 April, the judiciary ruled that Telegram would be permanently banned for "disrupting national unity, allowing foreign countries to spy on Iran".[18] According to multiple reports, Telegram continued to oppose the storing of the data of Internet users on servers inside the Islamic Republic of Iran, in addition to resisting the shutting down of thousands of channels.

[14] See http://www.ilna.ir/fa/tiny/news-594000.

[15] The Charter on Citizens' Rights does not contain enforcement guarantees but, according to the Government, is "tantamount to the plan and guideline of the Government for the observance and advancement of the fundamental rights of ... Iran". See http://epub.citizensrights.ir/CitizensRightsEN.pdf.

[16] Simon Kemp, "Digital in 2018: world's Internet users pass the 4 billion mark", 30 January 2018.

[17] See https://twitter.com/durov/status/947441456238735360.

[18] Reporters without Borders for Freedom of Information, "Iranian court imposes total ban on Telegram", 4 May 2018.

34. On 6 May, a group of Iranian lawyers filed a petition at a court in Tehran to overturn the order blocking Telegram, arguing that it was in contravention of article 570 of the Islamic Penal Code. The same day, in a post on social media, the President indicated that the "failure to follow legal procedures and the use of force and judicial means is the opposite of democracy",[39] and that "the filtering and blocking of Telegram was not carried out by the Government, which does not approve of it".[40]

35. In the course of 2018, the State has sought to encourage greater use of local platforms amid concerns that it may interfere with online privacy in ways that deter the exercise of the rights to freedom of opinion and expression. For example, it has been reported that Soroush, a messaging service established by companies linked to the national radio and television broadcaster, includes features enabling access by the authorities to personal details of channel administrators, such as their telephone numbers. Soroush accounts can only be accessed by holders of SIM cards that have been registered in association with a national identity document. The personal information of Internet users associated with their identity documents, including private addresses, was available on Soroush despite users not directly registering on the network.

36. Article 21 of the Computer Crimes Law, adopted in 2010, includes the requirement for Internet service providers to maintain records of Internet traffic data and personal information of Internet users, while under article 48, Internet service providers are required to record data from telephone conversations over the Internet, in violation of the right to privacy. In August 2017, the Supreme Council of Cyberspace, accountable to the office of the Supreme Leader, introduced new regulations,[41] which increased the authorities' surveillance capabilities, including through the consolidation of centralized management of the national Internet and related technology infrastructure. By creating significant obstacles for foreign and local companies to circumvent State control and censorship, these regulations affect all Internet operations in the country, further limiting the exercise of the right to freedom of expression and to access information.

37. According to information received by OHCHR, international journalists were provided with greater access to the country and increased freedom to cover issues such as social and military affairs. According to the Government, in 2017, 887 foreign correspondents from 316 media outlets travelled to the Islamic Republic of Iran, and 156 foreign media outlets and 310 foreign journalists are currently working in the country.[42]

38. However, reports of the arbitrary arrest, detention and harassment of mainly Iranian journalists and media workers and their families continued to be received. The harassment of journalists has also been directed to those covering the Islamic Republic of Iran from abroad. An injunction against over 150 former and current staff members of the British Broadcasting Corporation Persian Service remains in place (see A/HRC/37/24, para. 34, and A/HRC/37/68, para. 34). Owing to Government action, the Association of Iranian Journalists has remained closed since August 2009. The Association was established in 1997 to protect journalists' rights, including in legal or employment disputes, and had over 6,000 members (see A/HRC/37/24, para. 34).

39. In October 2016, the Government proposed a new bill, the "comprehensive mass media regulatory plan", envisaging the creation of a "media affairs commission", which would be empowered to suspend journalists if they are deemed to have violated

[39] Al Jazeera, "Iran's Rouhani condemns court order to block Telegram app", 5 May 2018.

[40] See https://www.instagram.com/p/BiXSzOEFQMF/?hl=de&taken-by=hrouhani.

[41] See http://bit.ly/2wCsbcT.

[42] See https://foreignmedia.farhang.gov.ir/fa/pressoffices.

religious principles and/or professional ethical codes. While consideration of the bill has remained dormant, there are concerns that, if enacted, the bill would give greater discretion to judges and prosecutors to determine whether an offence has been committed.

D. Groups in focus

Situation of women and girls

40. The Secretary-General is encouraged by the approval by the judicial and legal commission of the parliament on 14 May of the bill for the protection of children and adolescents, currently pending review in the plenary.[43] The Secretary-General also welcomes the introduction of the "comprehensive bill on ensuring the protection of women against violence" submitted to the parliament.[44] The bill is focused on the protection of women, the prevention of abuse, rehabilitation and ensuring improved processes in the interrogation of female offenders. The Secretary-General understands that the National Security Committee is currently reviewing a bill aimed at allowing married women to travel abroad without spousal approval, which was introduced by the Government to the parliament on 18 July 2017. He encourages the enactment of the bill.

41. The Secretary-General notes the positive developments related to the promotion of the rights and participation of women. The President appointed women to high-ranking positions, including to the posts of Vice-President for Women and Family Affairs, Deputy Minister of Petroleum, Vice-President for Legal Affairs and President's Assistant for Civil Rights.[45] Despite some progress, the limited representation of women in institutions such as the parliament — with 6 per cent of seats — indicate that major impediments for the political participation of women persist.

42. Civil law denies women equal rights, including in marriage, divorce, child custody, inheritance and citizenship. Discrimination continues to prevail in access to the job market. Despite major advances in women's post-secondary education, the female labour force participation in the Islamic Republic of Iran remains one of the lowest globally (17 per cent).[46] The Islamic Republic of Iran has ratified 14 International Labour Organization (ILO) conventions, including the Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111). In its latest comments on the country, published in 2018,[47] the ILO Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations raised its concerns about persisting legal restrictions on women's access to employment, which contravene the Convention. The Civil Code allows a husband to prevent his wife from engaging in an occupation which, in his view, is incompatible with preserving the dignity or interests of the family. The Comprehensive Population and Family Excellence Plan establishes a hierarchy in hiring practices, which would give rise to discrimination against women on the basis of sex and marital and family status. The Government noted in its comments that the Plan is to be developed further.

43. Figures published by the Statistical Centre of the Islamic Republic of Iran in March 2018 indicated that 41 per cent of women between the ages of 15 and 29 years

[43] Islamic Republic of Iran, *UPR mid-term report (2015–2016)*.

[44] Ibid.

[45] Ibid.

[46] International Labour Organization (ILO) and World Bank, "Labor force participation rate, female (per cent of female population ages 15+) (modeled ILO estimate)", ILOSTAT database. Available at https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.TLF.CACT.FE.ZS.

[47] ILO, Normlex. Available at http://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=1000:11110:::NO:::.

were unemployed.[48] The highest unemployment rates were found in provinces most populated by ethnic and religious minorities, where women face intersectional discrimination. According to a report published by the Islamic Parliament Research Centre in December 2017, the unemployment rate among female graduates in provinces such as Kordestan, Kermanshah and Kerman was 80 per cent. Commenting on the present report, the Government noted that the Vice-President for Women and Family Affairs had required governors to adopt a "provincial document on the promotion of women".

44. According to information received by OHCHR, on 8 March, protestors held a demonstration in front of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs to protest against gender-based discrimination in hiring and at the workplace. According to the Government, the demonstration was held in the absence of relevant permits. Fifty-nine women and 25 men were arrested for participating in the demonstration. While the majority of those arrested were released the following day, 19 demonstrators were transferred to the Fashafiyah and Gharchak prisons, 14 of whom were charged with "acting against national security". By 19 March, most had been released on bail.

45. Child marriage remains a serious concern that has been raised repeatedly by international human rights mechanisms, including the Committee on the Rights of the Child in 2016. The legal age for marriage under the Civil Code is 13 years for girls and 15 years for boys. Girls can be married as young as 9 years old with the permission of a court. Quoting figures from Statistical Centre of the Islamic Republic of Iran,[49] the head of the Women's Fraction in the parliament stated on 8 March that during the previous year (March 2016 to March 2017) 37,000 girls under 15 years of age had been married, while 2,000 had been divorced or had become widows in the same period.

46. Repressive and discriminatory rules concerning the dress code for women and girls continue to be enforced. Women who do not wear a hijab in public can be sentenced to up to two months in prison or be fined. According to a survey conducted in 2014 and published by the Office of the President in February 2018, half of Iranians indicated that they were in favour of lifting the requirement of compulsory hijab.[50] The number of women who have publicly supported the online campaign against compulsory veiling, "My Stealthy Freedom",[51] or of those who gave support to the online "#whitewednesday" social media campaign protesting against the policy continued to grow. On 27 December 2017, a wave of protests known as the "Girls of Revolution Street" began after Vida Movahed was arrested for taking off and waving her hijab on a stick in public in Tehran. She was reportedly detained incommunicado for several weeks, leading to a new wave of social media posts using the hashtag #Whereisshe? On 28 January, she was released on bail.

47. On 1 February, 29 people were arrested for their involvement in the "My Stealthy Freedom" campaign. Some faced charges of "a sinful act", "violating public decency" or "encouraging immorality or prostitution",[52] which can carry a sentence of 10 years of imprisonment. Most were released on bail. Some female protesters were subsequently sentenced to up to two years in prison on the charge of "encouraging moral corruption". OHCHR received reports of cases of female protestors who were injured during their arrest as a result of the excessive use of force by law enforcement officials.

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[48] See https://www.amar.org.ir/Portals/1/releases/LFS_Year_1396.pdf.

[49] See https://www.amar.org.ir/english/.

[50] Thomas Erdbrink, "Compulsory veils? Half of Iranians say 'no' to pillar of revolution", *New York Times*, 4 February 2018.

[51] See http://mystealthyfreedom.net/en/.

[52] See https://goo.gl/uqVfRx.

48. Judicial officials have publicly condemned the protests as having been instigated by foreign influence. On 7 March, the Prosecutor of Tehran, Abbas Dolatabadi, qualified the protests as "unobtrusive", yet contrary to Islamic values and motivated by the content of social networks.[53] The chief prosecutor of Tehran Province, Gholam Esmaili, stated that the protests should be "treated with decisiveness", describing them as having been instigated by "enemies of Islam".[54]

49. The Secretary-General is concerned by the response of judicial authorities to the protests against compulsory hijab. As documented by the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, the enforcement of such a dress code on women violates their freedom of religion and belief, in terms of their freedom from being forced to wear or display religious symbols (see E/CN.4/2006/5, paras. 52 and 60, and A/HRC/7/10/Add.1, para. 126).

Situation of human rights defenders, activists and political prisoners

50. The Secretary-General remains deeply concerned about the situation of human rights defenders and activists who have been imprisoned in connection with their activities.

51. Since issuance of the previous report, Narges Mohammadi, Arash Sadeghi, Soheil Arabi, Mohammad Ali Taheri and Atena Daemi all remain imprisoned despite continued calls for their release.[55] The Secretary-General is further disturbed by reports published in June that Mr. Arabi was beaten by other inmates at Great Tehran Penitentiary and Ms. Mohammadi was hospitalized owing to her health further deteriorating. Commenting on the present report, the Government stated that Mr. Arabi was in good health and that Ms. Mohammadi had access to ongoing medical care. In May, the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention expressed grave concern for the welfare of Mr. Sadeghi, a student activist, and rendered an opinion that his detention was arbitrary and calling for his release (see A/HRC/WGAD/2018/19). In comments provided, the Government stated that Mr. Sadeghi had access to appropriate care in prison.

52. In March, special procedures expressed concern at the treatment of women human rights defenders Atena Daemi and Golrokh Iraee, and called for their release.[56]

53. In January, Kavous Seyed-Emami, the head of the Persian Wildlife Heritage Foundation, was arrested in Tehran along with six staff members of the Foundation. They were accused of gathering classified information under the guise of environmental projects. In February, Mr. Seyed-Emami was found dead in Evin prison. The authorities claimed he committed suicide, which was questioned by his family and non-governmental organizations. As of July 2018, the whereabouts of the other detained environmentalists remained unknown, while more environmentalists have been detained since May. Subsequently, the wife of Mr. Seyed-Emami, Maryam Mombeini, was prevented from leaving the Islamic Republic of Iran, her passport was confiscated, and she was subjected to repeated interrogations and suffered health complications.[57] In comments provided on the present report, the Government indicated that the cases of those detained had not yet led to the issuance of a verdict.

[53] See https://goo.gl/uqVfRx.

[54] See https://goo.gl/pXTN5e.

[55] See A/HRC/WGAD/2017/48, A/HRC/WGAD/2018/19 and OHCHR, "Death sentence on *alternative health practitioner* highlights alarming use of capital punishment in Iran — Zeid", 5 August 2015.

[56] OHCHR, "United Nations experts alarmed by reports of human rights defenders beaten in Iran jail", 19 March 2018.

[57] Center for Human Rights in Iran, "Widow hospitalized after IRGC storms home of Iranian Canadian who died in Iranian State custody", 27 June 2018.

54. The Secretary-General is concerned that recent arrests and the treatment of lawyers risk undermining the right to an effective defence and the administration of justice. On 13 June, Nasrin Sotoudeh, a prominent human rights lawyer, was arrested and transferred to Evin prison following her representation of women who had protested against compulsory veiling. Reports indicate that she will face charges related to national security on the basis of allegations that she had colluded with some of the protestors against the State.[58] Another lawyer, Zeinab Taheri, was also arrested directly after the execution of her client, Mohammad Salas, for publicly revealing details of the case.[59] In March, an imprisoned human rights lawyer, Abdolfattah Soltani, began a hunger strike amid concerns for his deteriorating health after learning that his request for the judicial review of his sentence had been denied.[60] Commenting on the present report, the Government stated that lawyers operated freely in the country and that the arrest of Ms. Sotoudeh was in implementation of a previously issued sentence.

55. In 2018 to date, OHCHR has continued to receive reports of reprisals against individuals and their families, including confiscation of passports, threats and intimidation through subjection to repeated interrogations. In particular, the Secretary-General reiterates his concern at the treatment of Raheleh Rahemipor, the sister of Hossein Rahemipor, whose case was reviewed by the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances in 2017. Ms. Rahemipor was sentenced to imprisonment for "spreading propaganda against the system" but was released on bail pending appeal (see A/HRC/36/31, para. 37). In May, however, new charges were brought against her. The Secretary-General reiterates the right of family members, including Ms. Rahemipor, to seek clarification of the fate of their loved ones without retaliation. In its comments on the present report, the Government stated that sanctions were not applied for solely communicating with the human rights mechanisms, and that Ms. Rahemipor was tried for allegedly committing abusive acts related to making allegations about the fate of her imprisoned family member and organizing a protest rally.

Arbitrary arrests and detention of dual nationals

56. The Secretary-General remains concerned about the situation of imprisoned dual and foreign nationals in the Islamic Republic of Iran, including Ahmadreza Djalali; Siamak and Baquer Namazi; Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe; Kamal Foroughi; Karan Vafadari and his wife, Afarin Neyssari; Xiyue Wang; and Nizar Zakka. Recent reports raised concern for the mental and physical health of a number of the aforementioned individuals, including Mr. Djalali, who reportedly has suffered serious health complications recently. He was sentenced to death in October 2017 on the charge of "corruption on earth".[61] In January, an application for judicial review of the sentence was dismissed without explanation. The Secretary-General reiterates the call of special procedures of the Human Rights Council in February 2017 to annul Mr. Djalali's death sentence[62] and in December 2017 to release him in the light of his

[58] Human Rights Watch, "Iran: prominent rights defender arrested — judiciary targets acclaimed human rights lawyer", 13 June 2018.

[59] Amnesty International, "Iran: outspoken lawyer arrested after protesting the execution of her client", 20 June 2018.

[60] Iran Human Rights Monitor, "Iran: imprisoned human rights activist Abdulfatah Soltani starts hunger strike", 26 March 2018.

[61] OHCHR, "United Nations rights experts call on Iran to annul death sentence against academic and free him", 20 December 2017, and "United Nations rights experts urge Iran to annul death sentence against Ahmadreza Djalali", 9 February 2018.

[62] OHCHR, "United Nations rights experts urge Iran to annul death sentence against Ahmadreza Djalali".

arbitrary detention (see A/HRC/WGAD/2017/92). In its comments on the present report, the Government noted that Mr. Djalali had refused to be transferred to hospital.

Situation of ethnic and religious minorities

57. The Government stated that fundamental rights are recognized for all Iranian citizens regardless of ethnic or religious affiliation, in compliance with articles 13, 19 and 20 of the Constitution. In 2018 to date, OHCHR has continued to receive reports [63]describing discrimination faced by ethnic and religious minorities, including denial of access to university and to employment opportunities, discriminatory access to basic services, such as health care, and underrepresentation in public affairs, including at the city council level. Restrictions placed upon the use of minority languages and cultural practices, including in primary and secondary education, continued in contravention of article 15 of the Constitution and possibly also in violation of article 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. OHCHR also received multiple reports of incitement of hatred against the Baha'i and Azerbaijani Turkish communities. Reports further indicate that members of minority groups constitute the majority of political prisoners in the Islamic Republic of Iran and a disproportionate percentage of persons executed on political and national security-related charges.[64]

58. In February 2018, special procedures issued a public statement expressing concern at jail sentences of between 10 and 15 years imposed on Pastor Victor Bet Tamraz, Amin Afshar Naderi and Hadi Asgari for, inter alia, allegedly "conducting evangelism" and "illegal house church activities", which, according to the authorities, amount to acting against national security.[65] All have been released on bail and are appealing their sentences. The son and wife of Pastor Tamraz were also charged with acting against national security. Commenting on the present report, the Government indicated that the cases were being considered by the appeals court.

59. In June 2017, Ramin Panahi was arrested for alleged membership of the Kurdish nationalist group Komala and was sentenced to death on charges of "taking up arms against the State". Special procedures issued statements calling for the annulment of his conviction in the light of reports of torture in detention and unfair trial.[66] OHCHR also received reports concerning the health and treatment of Kurdish prisoners Zanyar Moradi and Loghman Moradi, who were sentenced to death in 2009 on the basis of confessions made following alleged beating. Similarly, OHCHR received information regarding the health of Zeynab Jalalian, who is serving a life sentence following her arrest in 2007 for alleged membership in a prohibited Kurdish opposition group.[67]

60. In February 2018, several hundred Gonabadi dervishes participated in a public protest in Tehran. Reports indicate that 300 persons were arrested, half of whom were later transferred to hospital for treatment, some allegedly having been subjected to severe beatings while in detention, which led to the death of one of the protesters while in custody.[68] During the protests, two protestors and five security agents were

[63] See, for example, Ceasefire Centre for Civilian Rights and Minority Rights Group International, *Rights Denied: Violations against ethnic and religious minorities in Iran* (London, Ceasefire Centre for Civilian Rights, Centre for Supporters of Human Rights and Minority Rights Group International, 2018).

[64] See https://ipa.united4iran.org/en/prisoner/.

[65] OHCHR, "Iran must ensure rights of Christian minority and fair trial for the accused — United Nations experts", 2 February 2018.

[66] OHCHR, "Iran must halt execution of Ramin Hossein Panahi, say United Nations rights experts", 18 June 2018.

[67] See also A/HRC/37/68, para. 73.

[68] Center for Human Rights in Iran, "Dozens of Gonabadi dervishes hospitalized in Tehran as Friday prayer leaders demand harsh retribution", 26 February 2018.

reportedly killed, including three police officers who were run over by a bus. Subsequently, Mohammad Salas, who belongs to the minority group, was reportedly interrogated without a lawyer, tortured and forced to sign a confession with regard to the murders. Despite later retracting his confession, he was sentenced to death and executed on 18 June. The Secretary-General remains deeply concerned about the fate and treatment of those still in detention, and calls for respect for their rights, including the right to fair trial and the absolute prohibition on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

III. Cooperation with international human rights mechanisms and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

A. Cooperation with human rights treaty bodies

61. The Islamic Republic of Iran has ratified six core international human rights treaties and is a signatory to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict. The Secretary-General welcomes the enhanced cooperation of the Islamic Republic of Iran with the treaty bodies and notes the Government's declared intention to submit periodic reports. He encourages the Government to submit its reports under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, which have been overdue since 2014 and 2013, respectively, and under the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, due in May 2018.

B. Cooperation with the universal periodic review

62. The Secretary-General encourages the Government to pursue a dialogue on the implementation of recommendations made during the universal periodic review on 31 October 2014 (see A/HRC/28/12 and A/HRC/28/12/Corr.1). He welcomes the establishment by the Government of a national committee comprising more than 40 entities in the preparation of its voluntary midterm report, covering the period from April 2015 to December 2016.[69] The Secretary-General encourages Iranian authorities, as outlined by the Government in its midterm report, to implement its "decision ... made, based on the Paris Principles, in the session of the High Council for Human Rights chaired by the Chief Justice as the Chair of the Council, in January 2016, to establish a national institution for human rights". The Secretary-General further encourages Iranian authorities and institutions to engage with OHCHR in the third cycle of the universal periodic review, scheduled for November 2019.

C. Cooperation with special procedures

63. The report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, Asma Jahangir, who passed away in February, was presented to the Human Rights Council in March (see A/HRC/37/68), along with the comments of the State (A/HRC/37/68/Add.1). Since that time, special procedures of the Council have continued to engage with the Government. In 2018 to date, they have issued nine communications, two of which were replied to by the Government, and have also issued 11 public statements. The Secretary-General notes that the Council renewed

[69] Islamic Republic of Iran, *UPR mid-term report (2015–2016)*.

the mandate of the Special Rapporteur in March 2018 (see Council resolution 37/30), and welcomes comments made by the Government indicating that it intends to engage with the Special Rapporteur. He further encourages the Government to invite the Special Rapporteur to visit the Islamic Republic of Iran.

D. Cooperation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

64. The Secretary-General welcomes the engagement of OHCHR and dialogue on human rights with Iranian officials, including the Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations in Geneva, the High Council for Human Rights and delegations visiting Geneva. OHCHR also intervened several times on behalf of juvenile offenders at risk of execution to call for an immediate halt to the implementation of their death sentences.

IV. Recommendations

65. **On the basis of the observations made in the present report, the Secretary-General makes the below recommendations to the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran.**

66. **The Secretary-General reiterates his call upon the Government to prohibit the execution of juvenile offenders in all circumstances and to commute their sentences. He urges the Government to abolish the mandatory death penalty and to introduce a moratorium on its use. Pending the introduction of a moratorium, legal guarantees and safeguards should be established, including respect for international due process and fair trial standards, notably with regard to the right to legal assistance at all stages of the proceedings and the abolition of *Qesameh*. Pending the introduction of a moratorium, existing legislation should be reviewed to ensure that the death penalty is only imposed for the "most serious crimes", that is, those involving intentional killing. Transparency concerning the numbers of persons who have been sentenced to death and executed — and for which crimes — should be ensured. Prompt notification about the date and place of executions should be provided, and access to reliable information on the death penalty should be guaranteed.**

67. **The Secretary-General urges the Government to repeal laws authorizing the use of torture and ill-treatment as a form of punishment, to ensure that prompt, thorough and effective investigations are undertaken by independent and impartial bodies into all deaths in custody and reports of torture or other ill-treatment and to ensure that those responsible are held accountable.**

68. **The Secretary-General urges the Government to ensure the mental and physical integrity of all detainees and to permit access to all places of detention for independent national and international monitoring organizations.**

69. **The Secretary-General urges the Government to ensure that international standards and guarantees of due process and fair trial are met, including by ensuring that all defendants, including those who are accused of crimes against the internal and external security of the State, are assured access to counsel of their choosing during the preliminary investigative stage and all subsequent stages of the judicial process.**

70. **The Secretary-General urges the Government to ensure that human rights defenders, lawyers, journalists and environmentalists can perform their roles safely and freely, without fear of harassment, arrest, detention and prosecution,**

and to release all those detained solely for legitimately and peacefully exercising their rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly.

71. **The Secretary-General urges the Government to repeal laws that criminalize or unduly restrict freedom of expression online, to ensure that online content is only restricted pursuant to a decision by an independent and impartial judicial authority in accordance with due process and to revoke decisions that enable the monitoring or filtering of content which are inconsistent with the right to privacy.**

72. **The Secretary-General urges the Government to amend and repeal laws and practices that discriminate against women and girls, in accordance with international standards, and to ensure that the rights of women human rights defenders and protestors are protected.**

73. **The Secretary-General urges the Government to protect the rights of all persons belonging to religious and ethnic minorities and to address all forms of discrimination against them, and to immediately and unconditionally release all those imprisoned for exercising their right to freedom of religion or belief.**

74. **The Secretary-General urges the Government to ensure that all individuals whose rights have been violated are afforded an effective remedy, to ensure prompt, thorough and effective investigations by independent and impartial bodies of allegations of violations and to ensure that those responsible are held accountable.**

75. **The Secretary-General urges the Government to ratify the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, aiming at the abolition of the death penalty, the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance and the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families.**

76. **The Secretary-General calls upon the Government to continue to cooperate and follow up on the concluding observations of all treaty bodies and special procedures mechanisms.**

77. **The Secretary-General encourages the Government to continue its constructive engagement with OHCHR on the follow-up to all recommendations made in the present and previous reports, and those of international human rights mechanisms, including the universal periodic review.**

United Nations A/73/300

General Assembly

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Seventy-third session
Item 115 of the provisional agenda*
Notification by the Secretary-General under Article 12, paragraph 2, of the Charter of the United Nations

Notification by the Secretary-General under Article 12, paragraph 2, of the Charter of the United Nations

Note by the Secretary-General**

1. In accordance with the provisions of Article 12, paragraph 2, of the Charter of the United Nations and with the consent of the Security Council, the Secretary-General has the honour to notify the General Assembly of matters relative to the maintenance of international peace and security that are being dealt with by the Council.

2. The matters relative to the maintenance of international peace and security of which the Security Council is seized are set out below. Items with which the Council has ceased to deal since the notification to the General Assembly at its seventy-second session (A/72/300) have been deleted. Those deletions, made pursuant to the note by the President of the Security Council dated 30 August 2017 (S/2017/507), are recorded in document S/2018/10/Add.9.

1. The India-Pakistan question.
2. The Hyderabad question.
3. Letter dated 20 February 1958 from the representative of the Sudan addressed to the Secretary-General.
4. Letter dated 11 July 1960 from the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba addressed to the President of the Security Council.
5. Letter dated 31 December 1960 from the Minister for External Affairs of Cuba addressed to the President of the Security Council.
6. The situation in Cyprus.
7. The situation in the Middle East.
8. The situation in the India/Pakistan subcontinent.

* A/73/150.
** The present notification relates to the period from 1 September 2017 to 31 August 2018.

18-12868 (E) 040918

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9. Letter dated 3 December 1971 from the Permanent Representatives of Algeria, Iraq, the Libyan Arab Republic and the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council.

10. Complaint by Cuba.

11. The situation concerning Western Sahara.

12. The situation between Iran and Iraq.

13. Letter dated 1 October 1985 from the Permanent Representative of Tunisia to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council.

14. Letter dated 19 April 1988 from the Permanent Representative of Tunisia to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council.

15. Letter dated 2 February 1990 from the Permanent Representative of Cuba to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council.

16. United Nations peacekeeping operations.

17. The situation between Iraq and Kuwait.

18. The situation in Liberia.

19. The situation in Somalia.

20. The situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

21. The situation in Georgia.

22. The question concerning Haiti.

23. The situation in Burundi.

24. The situation in Afghanistan.

25. International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals.[1]

26. The situation in the Great Lakes region.

27. The situation concerning the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

28. The situation in the Central African Republic.

29. Security Council resolutions 1160 (1998), 1199 (1998), 1203 (1998), 1239 (1999) and 1244 (1999).

30. Children and armed conflict.

31. The situation in Guinea-Bissau.

32. Protection of civilians in armed conflict.

33. Small arms.

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[1] Pursuant to the note by the President of the Security Council dated 2 February 2018 (S/2018/90), the earlier consideration by the Council of issues under the agenda items entitled "International Tribunal for the Prosecution of Persons Responsible for Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law Committed in the Territory of the Former Yugoslavia since 1991" and "International Criminal Tribunal for the Prosecution of Persons Responsible for Genocide and Other Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law Committed in the Territory of Rwanda and Rwandan Citizens Responsible for Genocide and Other Such Violations Committed in the Territory of Neighbouring States between 1 January 1994 and 31 December 1994" were subsumed under the item entitled "International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals".

34. General issues relating to sanctions.

35. The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question.

36. Women and peace and security.

37. Briefing by the President of the International Court of Justice.

38. Briefing by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

39. Briefing by the Chairperson-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

40. Meeting of the Security Council with the troop- and police-contributing countries pursuant to resolution 1353 (2001), annex II, sections A and B.

41. Threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts.

42. Briefings by Chairs of subsidiary bodies of the Security Council.

43. The situation in Côte d'Ivoire.

44. Security Council mission.

45. The promotion and strengthening of the rule of law in the maintenance of international peace and security.

46. Central African region.

47. Non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

48. Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan and South Sudan.

49. Peacebuilding and sustaining peace.

50. The situation concerning Iraq.

51. Threats to international peace and security.

52. Non-proliferation.

53. Peace consolidation in West Africa.

54. The situation in Myanmar.

55. Non-proliferation/Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

56. Maintenance of international peace and security.

57. Peace and security in Africa.

58. Cooperation between the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations in maintaining international peace and security.

59. Briefing by the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator.

60. The situation in Libya.

61. The situation in Mali.

62. Letter dated 28 February 2014 from the Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2014/136).

63. Letter dated 13 April 2014 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2014/264).

64. The situation in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

65. Identical letters dated 19 January 2016 from the Permanent Representative of Colombia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council (S/2016/53).

66. Letter dated 13 March 2018 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2018/218).

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General Assembly

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Seventy-third session
Item 29 of the provisional agenda*
Advancement of women

Violence against women in politics**

Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the members of the General Assembly the report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, Dubravka Šimonović, submitted in accordance with Assembly resolution 71/170.

* A/73/150.

** The present report was submitted after the deadline in order to reflect the most recent developments.

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Report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences on violence against women in politics

Summary

In the present report, the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences analyses the issue of violence against women in politics, including in parliament and elections, and outlines her conclusion and recommendations on preventing and combating such manifestations of gender-based violence.

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I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted by the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, Dubravka Šimonović, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 71/170. In section II, she provides an overview of her mandate's initiative to develop institutional links and thematic cooperation between independent global and regional mechanisms on violence and discrimination against women. The activities carried out by the Special Rapporteur during the reporting period are included in her thematic report to the Human Rights Council (A/HRC/38/47). In section III, she analyses violence against women in politics and the main challenges to addressing it. In section IV, she outlines her conclusion and recommendations on preventing and combating violence against women in politics.

II. Activities

2. During the reporting period, the Special Rapporteur continued to implement the mandate's initiative on strengthening institutional and thematic cooperation between independent global and regional mechanisms on violence against women and women's rights. From 12 to 23 March 2018, in New York, she participated in the sixty-second session of the Commission on the Status of Women, where she launched a new initiative to develop institutional links and thematic cooperation between independent mechanisms with a view to improving the implementation of the existing international and regional legal and policy framework on combating violence against women.

3. In particular, on 13 March 2018, the Special Rapporteur convened a high-level panel on institutional cooperation between independent global and regional mechanisms dealing with violence and discrimination against women, with the participation of the Chair of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, a member of the Working Group on the issue of discrimination against women in law and in practice, the Chair of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, the President of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, the Chair of the Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence of the Council of Europe and the President of the Committee of Experts of the Follow-up Mechanism to the Belém do Pará Convention,[1] as well as the Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Executive Director of United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women). On the same day, together with other independent global and regional mechanisms on women's rights, she also held a meeting with the Secretary-General, during which he reiterated his support for the mandate's initiative.

4. At the thirty-fifth session of the Human Rights Council, held in June 2018, the Special Rapporteur presented her thematic report entitled "Online violence against women and girls" (A/HRC/38/47). In it, she analyses online violence against women and girls from a human rights perspective and makes recommendations on how to prevent and combat it in the broader framework of human rights standards addressing structural discrimination and violence against women. She also presented her country visit reports on Australia (A/HRC/38/47/Add.1) and the Bahamas (A/HRC/38/47/Add.2).

[1] Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women (Convention of Belém do Pará) of 1994.

III. Violence against women in politics

A. Introduction

5. In the present report, the Special Rapporteur analyses violence against women in politics, its causes and consequences, and how it affects women's human rights and their participation in political and public life. The analysis reflects consultations with and information provided by various stakeholders and a range of national, regional and international organizations, following a call for submissions made at an expert group meeting on violence against women in politics, which was held on 8 and 9 March 2018 in New York.[2] The meeting was organized by UN-Women, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner on Human Rights (OHCHR) and the Special Rapporteur, in collaboration with the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) and the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI).[3]

6. In line with the mandate's initiative to strengthen cooperation and synergies between independent global and regional mechanisms dealing with women's rights, other entities represented at the meeting included: the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women; the Working Group on the issue of discrimination against women in law and in practice; the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights; the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights; the Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence of the Council of Europe; and the Committee of Experts of the Follow-up Mechanism to the Belém do Pará Convention. Their representatives provided information on violence against women in politics from the perspective of their corresponding global and regional mandates within the framework of the implementation of their respective women's human rights instruments. Based on their input, the Special Rapporteur provides recommendations in the present report on how to prevent and combat violence against women in politics.

B. Manifestations of violence against women in politics in the world today

7. The equal participation of women and their access to positions of political leadership and decision-making at all levels are fundamental to achieving gender equality, as enshrined in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (art. 2) of 1979 and reaffirmed in Goal 5 of the Sustainable Development Goals. Globally, the degree of political participation by women has improved in the past decades. Millions of women now actively participate in public and political life as members of political parties, elected officials or civil servants. More than 10,000 women today serve as national parliamentarians.[4]

8. Women remain significantly underrepresented, however, at all levels of political decision-making. As at 1 January 2017, only 7.2 per cent of heads of State, 5.7 per cent of heads of government and 23.3 per cent of members of parliament were women.[5] To address the imbalance in terms of women's political participation,

[2] UN-Women/OHCHR Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council, report of the expert group meeting on violence against women in politics (New York, 8–9 March 2018). Available at https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Women/SR/EGM_Report.pdf.

[3] Background information on violence against women in politics, including submissions made to the Special Rapporteur on the subject, is available at: https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Women/SRWomen/Pages/ViolenceAgainstWomeninPolitics.asp.

[4] IPU, "Women in national parliaments: situation as of 1st June 2018". Available at http://ipu.org/wmn-e/world.htm.

[5] IPU and UN-Women, "Women in politics: 2017". Available at http://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2017/4/women-in-politics-2017-map.

numerous States have adopted temporary special measures, such as quotas and parity measures, in line with article 4, paragraph 1, of the Convention and general recommendation No. 25 (2004) on temporary special measures of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

9. The underrepresentation of women in politics and public life, including in the institutions of all States and in representative positions at the international level (such as ambassadors and delegates in permanent missions) is caused and exacerbated by discrimination, harmful stereotypes and gender-based violence.[6] Violence against women in politics has, until recently, received little attention. Data on the subject are limited and their collection constitutes a challenge. Some studies, nonetheless, have revealed that such violence is widespread and systematic.[7] Others show that the violence targeting women who hold public office and political decision-making positions has a chilling impact on the political ambition of young women, with inter-generational consequences for the full realization of their political rights.

10. For the purposes of the present report, "women in politics" includes all women involved in political activities, those elected at the national or local levels, members and candidates of political parties, government and State officials at the local, national and international levels, civil servants, ministers, ambassadors and other positions in the diplomatic corps. Some women in politics may be more exposed to risks of gender-based violence than others, including: human rights defenders; young, indigenous, lesbian, bisexual and transgender and intersex activists; members of opposition or minority groups; and those voicing minority, dissenting or "controversial" views.

11. Men and women can both experience violence in politics. Such acts of violence against women, however, target them because of their gender and take gender-based forms, such as sexist threats or sexual harassment and violence. Their aim is to discourage women from being politically active and exercising their human rights and to influence, restrict or prevent the political participation of individual women and women as a group.[8]

12. Such violence, including in and beyond elections, consists of any act of gender-based violence, or threat of such acts, that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering and is directed against a woman in politics because she is a woman, or affects women disproportionately. This definition recalls the definitions of gender-based violence included in the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (art. 1) and in general recommendation No. 19 (1992) on violence against women (para. 7) and general recommendation No. 35 (2017) on gender-based violence against women, updating general recommendation No. 19 of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

13. The aim of violence against women in politics is to preserve traditional gender roles and stereotypes and maintain structural and gender-based inequalities. It can take many forms, from misogynistic and sexist verbal attacks to the most commonplace acts of harassment and sexual harassment, much of it increasingly online, or even femicide. The murder in 2016 of Jo Cox, a member of Parliament in

[6] See the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (arts. 7 and 8) and general recommendations No. 5 (1988) on temporary special measures; No. 8 (1988) on the implementation of article 8 of the Convention; No. 23 (1997) on political and public life; and No. 25 (2004) on article 4, paragraph 1, of the Convention (temporary special measures) (para. 37) of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

[7] IPU, "Sexism, harassment and violence against women parliamentarians", *Issues Brief* (Geneva, October 2016).

[8] NDI, *Not the Cost: Stopping Violence against Women in Politics* (Washington, D.C., 2016).

the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, drew public attention as it demonstrated, tragically, that women continue to suffer gender-based oppression when engaging in public and political life. The killing in March 2018 of a prominent Afro-Brazilian human rights defender, Marielle Franco, in Brazil shows how the intersection of gender, race and participation in public life can imperil activist women. Another emblematic case was the assassination in 2016 of Honduran environmental activist Berta Cáceres, one of the many women environmental activists killed each year.[9]

14. In her report to the Human Rights Council on online violence against women (A/HRC/38/47), the Special Rapporteur highlighted that women in politics are regularly victims of online violence and violence facilitated by information and communications technology (ICT). They receive online threats, generally of a misogynistic nature and often sexualized. Ultimately, online violence against women in politics is a direct attack on the full participation by women in political and public life and their enjoyment of their human rights. The extent to which such online violence is used by State and non-State actors to spread disinformation aimed at discouraging women from participating in politics, swaying popular support away from politically-active women and influencing how men and women view particular issues has yet to be fully understood.

15. Violence against women in politics may be carried out by State and non-State actors, including members of political parties, fellow or opposition parliamentarians, voters, media representatives or religious leaders. It takes place primarily in public but can also occur in the private or domestic sphere. Perpetrators are not confined to political adversaries. In many cases, they can be women's peers, family members or friends trying to discourage them from being politically active. Under international human rights law, States not only bear direct responsibility for the acts or omissions carried out by its organs and agents but also have due diligence obligations to prevent, investigate and punish acts or omissions carried out by private persons and non-State actors.[10]

16. Violence against women in politics is often normalized and tolerated, especially in contexts where patriarchy is deeply embedded in society. Stereotypes associating men with interaction in the public sphere and women with the private, domestic sphere of family and home persist in most parts of the world today. Such norms include perceptions that a woman's role should be restricted to the private domain (home and caretaking), that politics is not relevant to the daily lives and needs of women and that women are incapable and ineffective leaders.

17. In addition, public awareness and actions to mitigate violence against women in politics are constrained by gender-based stereotypes often projected by the media, including social media. All forms of violence against women are generally underreported because of the culture of silence, stigma and impunity associated with gender-based violence.[11] In politics and elections, women may be more likely to conceal incidents of violence owing to the fear of appearing weak or unfit for the world of politics.

18. As a result, women in politics who fall victim to gender-based violence face multifaceted barriers to obtaining justice that go beyond their situation as women in politics, including re-victimization during the reporting and complaint process, resistance from law enforcement officials responsible for prosecuting perpetrators

[9] See Global Witness, *On Dangerous Ground* (London, 2016).

[10] UN-Women and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), *Preventing Violence against Women in Elections: A Programming Guide* (2017).

[11] Ibid., p. 19.

and inadequate legal protection or access to integrated services, all of which are features common to other forms of gender-based violence against women.

19. Frequently, reports of threats, harassment or other forms of gender-based violence are dismissed by the authorities, especially when there has been no physical harm. The gender-specific dimensions of the violence faced by women in politics are still strongly resisted and sometimes rejected. On occasion, the abuse, harassment and attacks are dismissed as a natural part of the cost of engaging in politics.[12] In reaction to such views, NDI launched its #NotTheCost campaign in 2016 to stop violence against women in politics.

20. Blaming the victims is a common feature of all forms of violence against women. Women victims of all forms of gender-based violence may be confronted with accusations of defamation, be marginalized or face the humiliation of not being taken seriously by the police. The consequences can be even harsher for women in politics who are publicly known. They may be viewed as politically disloyal, criticized for not "being up to the job" or seen as unreliable partners, all of which can have a devastating impact on their professional careers. As a result, many victims refrain from speaking publicly or reporting the violence to which they are subjected, thereby leaving the perpetrators unpunished.[13]

21. Data and standard indicators for measuring the incidence of violence against women in politics and during elections are lacking at all levels. Acts of such violence tend to be treated as isolated incidents rather than manifestations of widespread, structural discrimination against women in political and public life.

22. During the expert group meeting held in March 2018, the Special Rapporteur collected the testimony of women who became victims of violence owing to their political activity, which highlights the challenges.[14] A former member of parliament in Pakistan, for instance, recounted having survived several attacks and that she had been accused of sexual involvement with the Prime Minister and had received death threats because of her work on legislation regarding women in the workforce and acid attacks. A former minister in Peru told the Special Rapporteur that the threats she had faced had touched her whole family, including her daughter and grandchildren, and close collaborators, all of whom had attempted to dissuade her from remaining in politics. A former Swedish parliamentarian who was active in anti-racism campaigns described years of threats and harassment through letters, telephone calls, text messages and online abuse. She said that, when she reported the incidents, the police explained that the threats were something that she had to learn to live with as a public person appearing in the local media. She noted that, more recently, there had been several court cases and convictions for such harassment in Sweden, sending an important signal that the perpetrators of harassment could be found and convicted.[15] In France, in 2016, 17 female former ministers spoke out against sexual harassment in French politics.[16]

1. Violence against women in parliaments

23. On average, 23.8 per cent of parliamentarians worldwide are women.[17] That achievement, however, is still far below parity, as a result of the structural discrimination, gender-based violence and inequalities that women face.

[12] See Sandra Pepera, "Review of the Committee on Standards in Public Life into the intimidation of parliamentary candidates" (Washington, D.C., NDI, 2018).

[13] IPU, "Sexism, harassment and violence against women parliamentarians", p. 7.

[14] UN-Women/OHCHR Special Procedures, Expert group meeting report, session 2.

[15] Ibid.

[16] UN-Women and UNDP, *Preventing Violence*, p. 40.

[17] IPU, "Women in national parliaments".

Traditionally, parliaments the world over have been composed of a majority of male representatives. Moreover, owing to the perception of power and immunity conferred by parliamentary status, which protects their freedom of expression, a culture of impunity for sexist remarks has prevailed among parliamentarians.

24. According to an IPU study, violence against women parliamentarians is a universal and systemic problem. The study, in which 55 women parliamentarians from 39 countries across five regions were surveyed, found that 81.8 per cent of them had experienced some form of psychological violence from members of the public and fellow parliamentarians; 44.4 per cent had received threats of death, rape, beatings or abduction during their parliamentary terms; 65 per cent had been subjected to sexist remarks, primarily by male colleagues in parliament and from opposing parties as well as their own. More than 60 per cent of those who had been subjected to sexist behaviour or violence believed that those acts were intended to dissuade them and their female colleagues from continuing in politics and were motivated by the clear-cut positions adopted by women parliamentarians on such issues as human and women's rights. According to the respondents, aggravating factors for women parliamentarians included: being members of the opposition party; being young or members of a minority group; and working for women's rights, in countries marked by a general context of insecurity or hostility to such rights.[18]

25. In 2018, NDI conducted a survey of 64 female and 76 male members of political parties from four countries, in which 70 per cent of respondents, men and women, affirmed that violence occurred in their political parties. Political violence, according to 44 per cent of respondents, was more likely to be experienced by women than men, while only 4 per cent believed it was more likely to target men.[19]

26. Despite such alarming data, many parliaments have few or no internal mechanisms for combating sexual harassment. Of the 42 parliaments covered by its survey, IPU found that: 35.8 per cent of the parliaments surveyed had regulations and codes prohibiting insults, vulgar comments and unacceptable behaviour; 21.2 per cent had a policy on sexual harassment against members of parliament; and 28.3 per cent had a procedure for settling complaints. IPU also found that, although more than half of the women parliamentarians surveyed who had been subjected to violence (51.7 per cent) had reported the incidents to the respective parliamentary security service or the police, some recounted that the police had failed to follow up on their complaints or provide security.[20]

27. There are, however, examples of initiatives to address gender-based violence in parliament at the national level.

28. In Canada, the House of Commons operates a policy on preventing and addressing harassment. In additions, under its Code of Conduct for Members of the House of Commons: Sexual Harassment between Members, all members are requested to contribute to a work environment free of sexual harassment by signing a pledge. Training sessions on the policy are also organized for members of Parliament and employees.

29. In France, a focal point in the National Assembly provides legal aid and psychological support to victims, who may also be referred to an ethics officer of the Assembly. Outreach efforts include the dissemination of information and material about the Criminal Code with regard to sexual harassment. Staff in the National

[18] IPU, "Sexism, harassment and violence against women parliamentarians".

[19] NDI, *No Party to Violence: Analyzing Violence against Women in Political Parties* (Washington, D.C., 2018).

[20] IPU, "Sexism, harassment and violence against women parliamentarians", p. 7.

Assembly receive training on sexual harassment and sign a pledge to respect the Criminal Code.

30. In Switzerland, the federal parliament has been experimenting with an independent, specialized anti-mobbing and harassment body that parliamentarians can approach anonymously.

31. In the United States of America, the House of Representatives passed the Congressional Accountability Act of 1995 Reform Act in February 2018. Under the bill, if enacted, members of Congress would be held accountable for misconduct and assistance would be provided to victims.

2. Violence against women in elections

32. The right of women to participate in public affairs, including by voting and standing for election, is an internationally recognized human right. It is important to consider genuine democratic elections within an international human rights framework using a human rights-based approach. Through participation in elections, women exercise their human rights to participate in political and public life, in particular their right to vote and to be eligible for positions in all public elected bodies on equal terms with men, in line with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (art. 7). Since elections are a key moment in which power is established and voting rights are realized, violence against women in elections remains a major barrier to the realization by women of their right to participate in political and public life and constitutes a specific category of violence against women in politics.

33. Violence against women in an electoral context can include acts of gender-based violence relating to registration and voting, running for elections and political campaigning, the announcement of results and the formation of government.[21] The electoral violence faced by women differs from that experienced by men, given the gendered nature of the violations. Very often, the violence is sexual in nature and may also consist of threats to their personal security and that of their loved ones, social ostracism and attacks on their moral character and self-confidence. They are more likely than men to face sexual harassment in their own political parties and from family members or be demeaned in a sexualized way. For example, in Pakistan, the leaders of five major political parties signed formal agreements to declare that they would not allow women to file candidate nomination papers or cast their votes in elections, citing local traditions as their reason for doing so.[22]

34. In addition to the possible short and long-term psychological and physical consequences for victims and their families and communities, the most immediate impact of violence against women in elections can include fewer women contesting elections and aspiring to political office, fewer elected women, falls in voter turnout and, in some cases, the postponement of elections. Violence at polling stations and against electoral staff may also discourage women from engaging in the vital area of electoral administration, which in turn may lead to a further reduction in women voter turnout and diminish their comfort with the election process.

35. Regrettably, violence against women in elections has been only sporadically visible, owing to a lack of regular data collection on a national, regional or global scale, which is the result of largely gender-blind election monitoring standards and the lack of political will to address violence against women in elections.

[21] UN-Women and UNDP, *Preventing Violence*.

[22] UN-Women and UNDP, *Preventing Violence*, p. 3; South Asia Partnership International and International IDEA, *Women, Representation and Violence: Exploring the Constituent Assembly Election in Nepal* (2008).

36. Efforts have been made, however, to collect such data, including through the establishment of commissions of inquiry into post-election violence that have helped to highlight the pervasiveness of such gender-based violence against women. In Kenya, for example, the Commission of Inquiry into Post-Election Violence, while investigating electoral violence, examined issues of sexual assault. In 2008, the Commission reported 900 cases of rape, gang rape, sexual mutilation and sodomy perpetrated against women between 2007 and 2008. It also reported that the perpetrators included security agents, organized gangs, individuals and known persons (neighbours, relatives and friends).[23]

37. According to the findings of one study, comparing more than 2,000 acts of election violence in six countries between 2006 and 2010 and containing data disaggregated by sex, women were victims in almost 40 per cent of all acts of election violence. However, the figure is presumed to be substantially higher, because data were not collected on the full range of forms of violence that women experience, including in the private sphere.[24]

38. Both election observation and violence monitoring programmes provide key opportunities for collecting information on violence against women in elections. By integrating gender dimensions and monitoring violence against women in elections during observation missions, data on violence against women in elections could be systematically collected and published in election reports.

39. Political parties are among the most common perpetrators of violence against women in politics[25] and discrimination by their members represents one of the biggest challenges to the participation by women in elections, given the threats and violence they face as candidates and when campaigning. Party leaders and members can address violence against women in elections by, for instance, expressing a commitment in the party's founding documents to eliminate such violence, publicly rejecting any form of such violence and instituting effective disciplinary procedures.

40. In 2017, UN-Women and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) published *Preventing Violence against Women in Elections: A Programming Guide*, in which experiences from more than 40 countries are analysed, actions needed for documenting, preventing and eliminating violence against women in elections are identified and the roles of the various actors who could be involved in implementing strategies are presented. In the guide, it is recommended that electoral management bodies could play an important role in addressing violence against women in elections by: mapping, monitoring and reporting violence against women in elections; analysing voter and candidate registration procedures to prevent barriers to women's participation; identifying measures for preventing and responding to violence perpetrated within political parties, particularly during the political campaign period; gathering information about violence against women in elections and the respective mitigation measures, which can be integrated into training programmes for electoral administrators and other election stakeholders.

41. Other organizations have also developed tools to combat violence against women in politics. NDI prepared an online incident report form to collect the testimonies of women political figures affected by violence and a votes-without-violence toolkit to help citizen observer groups around the world to monitor and mitigate electoral violence against women. IPU has carried out extensive work on the

[23] Kenya, Commission of Inquiry into Post-Election Violence (2008); Human Rights Watch, *"They Were Men in Uniform": Sexual Violence against Women and Girls in Kenya's 2017 Elections* (2017).

[24] Gabrielle Bardall, "Breaking the mold: understanding gender and electoral violence", *White Paper Series* (International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), 2011).

[25] Ibid.; UN-Women and UNDP, *Preventing Violence*, p. 36.

issue, including in relation to mapping and measuring violence against women in politics, focusing on the situation of women parliamentarians. The International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) has developed tools to help document violence against women in politics and elections through quantitative and qualitative analysis and the use of ICT.[26] The foundation has also led the development of VAWE-Online, a globally adaptable tool to measure violence against women in politics in social media. Online spaces are the arena for many acts that violate the political rights of individuals or groups on the basis of their gender identity.[27] The tool (developed in cooperation with the Consortium for Elections and Political Process Strengthening and its Global Elections and Political Transitions subprogramme) uses sentiment analysis to identify and analyse patterns and trends of harassment and aggressive and abusive comments made to women active in civic and political life. Pilots were run in 2018 during local elections in Sir Lanka and general elections in Zimbabwe.[28] It is also being use in Ukraine. International IDEA has also produced a useful electoral risk management tool to collect data on violence against women in politics.[29]

C. International human rights law and independent mechanisms on violence against women

42. Violence against women in politics violates women's human right to live free from gender-based violence in political and public life and affects the realization of all other human rights, including the ability of elected women to represent their constituents effectively.

43. International human rights law explicitly addresses the right to the equal participation by women in political and public life in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (art. 7) but not the specific issue of violence against women in politics. General standards prohibiting gender-based violence against women, however, are applicable, although not yet fully applied at the national level.

44. The right to participation in political and public life is guaranteed to all without distinction. The Convention on the Political Rights of Women of 1953 was the first instrument of international law under which the political rights of women were enshrined and protected. Under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of 1966, equal and effective protection against any kind of discrimination in the enjoyment of rights and freedoms is guaranteed to all.

45. The right of all to freedom of opinion and expression and the right of peaceful assembly are enshrined in articles 19 and 21 of the Covenant. Article 25 guarantees the right to political participation, including the right to take part in the conduct of public affairs, to vote and be elected and to have equal access to public service.

46. In the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women of 1993, reference is made to the equal protection of the right of women to enjoy all human

[26] IFES, Gabrielle Bardall, "Violence against women in politics: IFES submission to Dr Dubravka Šimonović, the OHCHR Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences" (31 May 2018). Available at https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Women/SR/IFES.pdf.

[27] See Jessica Huber and Lisa Kammerud, *Violence against Women in Elections: A Framework for Assessment, Monitoring and Response* (Arlington, Virginia: IFES, 2016).

[28] See IFES, *Violence against Women in Elections in Zimbabwe: An IFES Assessment* (Arlington, Virginia: 2018).

[29] See https://www.idea.int/data-tools/tools/electoral-risk-management-tool. Work is also being done at the national level, for instance by the Kenya National Commission on Human Rights and the Federation of Women Lawyers in Kenya and the Women's Action Network in Sri Lanka.

rights and fundamental freedoms in the political field, among others (art. 3) and defines the scope of violence against women to include public and private life.

47. Under the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women, States are required to take appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in political and public life and to ensure that they enjoy, on equal terms with men, the right: to vote and to be eligible for election to all publicly elected bodies; to participate in the formulation of government policy and the implementation thereof and to hold public office and perform all public functions at all levels of government; and to participate in associations (art. 7).

48. States are also required to take appropriate measures to ensure to women, on equal terms with men, the opportunity to represent their Governments at the international level and to participate in the work of international organizations (art. 8).

49. Under article 5 of the Convention, States should adopt measures to modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women and to eliminate prejudices and customary and all other practices based on the idea of the inferiority or superiority of either of the sexes and on stereotyped roles for men and women, in political and public life.

50. In its general recommendation No. 23 (1997) on political and public life, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women calls on States to ensure that organizations such as political parties and trade unions do not discriminate against women and to identify and implement temporary special measures to ensure the equal representation of women in all fields covered by articles 7 and 8 of the Convention (paras. 42–43).

51. Under the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, States are further committed to ensuring women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life (Goal 5, target 5.5) and eliminating all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation (target 5.2). In addition, Goal 16 is aimed at ensuring responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels (target 16.7). The equal participation of women in public affairs is key to reaching that target.

52. The links between violence against women and their participation in politics are addressed in General Assembly resolution 66/130 of 2011 on women and political participation, in which the Assembly called for zero tolerance for violence against women elected officials and candidates for political office. That call was reaffirmed in 2016 by IPU in a resolution adopted at its 135th assembly on the freedom of women to participate in political processes fully, safely and without interference. In 2013, the report of the Secretary-General on measures taken and progress achieved in the promotion of women and political participation (A/68/184) included measures designed to prevent violence against women during elections or against women holding elected posts.

53. The Vice Chair of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women confirmed at the expert group meeting held in March 2018 that violence against women in politics, which is not specifically mentioned either in the Convention or in the Committee's general recommendations No. 19 and No. 35, was not systematically addressed by the Committee. She recommended that States parties that were failing to address violence against women in politics should request the Committee to examine the issue during the reporting process and to undertake constructive dialogue with them. She observed that other mechanisms were available

under the Optional Protocol to the Convention, which allowed for individual petitions and inquiries into grave or systematic violations of the Convention.[30]

54. Since 2012, the issue has begun to receive attention in the Committee's concluding observations on the periodic reports of States parties.[31] For instance, in 2012, the Committee urged Togo to "implement without delay the recommendations of the report of the Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission regarding the political violence, including violence against women" and to "ensure that those responsible for violations of the human rights of women during the pre-electoral period are brought to justice and that all acts of sexual violence are punished" (CEDAW/C/TGO/CO/6-7, para. 23 (g) and (h)). In 2016, it recommended that Honduras "take into account the IPU issues brief on sexism, harassment and violence against women parliamentarians, expedite the adoption of the bill on harassment and political violence towards women and enforce laws on gender equality and freedom from violence and discrimination against women in political and public life" (CEDAW/C/HND/CO/7-8, para. 27 (c)). In 2017, it expressed concern that in Italy (CEDAW/C/ITA/CO/7, paras. 31 and 32) "women in politics are often targets of sexist attacks and harassment because of their gender and face negative cultural attitudes and gender stereotypes within political parties and the media and among voters" and recommended that the State party "consider the adoption of specific legislation to combat political harassment and sexist attacks".

55. In 2013, the Working Group on the issue of discrimination in law and practice submitted a report to the Human Rights Council, in which it addressed the issue of eliminating discrimination against women in political and public life, with a focus on political transition (A/HRC/23/50). One member of the Working Group told the expert group committee that violence against women in politics was global, cross-cutting and relevant to the mandates of many organizations and mechanisms.[32]

56. Since the beginning of her tenure, the Special Rapporteur has made the issue of violence against women in politics a thematic priority of her mandate, affirming that women in politics are targets not only because of their political activism but by the very fact that they are women who are politically active.

57. Her call, contained in a previous report to the General Assembly (A/71/398), for the establishment of a "femicide watch" in all States to track gender-related killings of women in politics and as a tool of prevention entails the collection of information on and monitoring of such cases to determine how such killings might be prevented.

58. The Special Rapporteur's initiative to establish and strengthen cooperation between independent global and regional human rights mechanisms working on violence against women led to the organization of the expert group meeting on violence against women in politics in March 2018, in which all the independent mechanisms on women's rights took part. The meeting provided them with a unique opportunity to exchange practices and experience on addressing violence against women in politics under their respective mandates. The Special Rapporteur believes that, through strengthened cooperation between independent global and regional mechanisms, common synergies and efforts to address violence against women under the existing human rights normative framework will contribute to closing gaps in combating and preventing violence against women in politics worldwide (A/72/134).

[30] UN-Women/OHCHR Special Procedures, Expert group meeting report, session 3.

[31] The issue has been addressed thus far in concluding observations concerning: the Bahamas (CEDAW/C/BHS/CO/1-5) in 2012; Togo (CEDAW/C/TGO/CO/6-7) in 2012; the Plurinational State of Bolivia (CEDAW/C/BOL/CO/5-6) in 2015; Honduras (CEDAW/C/HND/CO/7-8) in 2016; Costa Rica (CEDAW/C/CRI/CO/7) in 2017; and Italy (CEDAW/C/ITA/CO/7) in 2017.

[32] UN-Women/OHCHR Special Procedures, Expert group meeting report, session 3.

59. The mandate has long worked in collaboration with civil society to raise awareness of the issue. Prompted by several emblematic femicide cases involving women in politics, which have been the subject of public statements by the mandate and communications addressed to States, the Special Rapporteur has encouraged all stakeholders to work with the mandate to provide data and information on cases of violence against women in politics. As part of its #NotTheCost campaign, NDI has created an incident report form to collect cases for transmission to the Special Rapporteur for her action through the communications procedure in order to deepen the awareness of Governments regarding the issue and highlight its global prevalence.[33]

60. The Special Rapporteur believes that the expert group meeting held in March 2018 marked the start of an enduring partnership between the United Nations system, international organizations, independent global and regional mechanisms dealing with violence against women and civil society organizations to tackle the problem of violence against women in politics worldwide.

D. Regional normative frameworks and independent mechanisms addressing violence against women in politics

61. In 2015, Committee of Experts of the Follow-up Mechanism to the Belém do Pará Convention adopted the Declaration on Political Harassment and Violence against Women. In the Declaration, which represents the first comprehensive regional instrument on violence against women in politics, political parties, political and social organizations and trade unions are called upon to create their own internal instruments and mechanisms to prevent, punish and eliminate violence against women in politics, and to conduct internal awareness-raising and training activities. Political harassment and violence against women are described as including "any action, conduct or omission, among others, based on their gender, individually or collectively, that has the purpose or result of undermining, annulling, impeding or restricting their political rights, violating the rights of women to a life free of violence and to participate in political and public affairs on an equal footing with men". It also affirms the commitment of the States parties to promote the adoption of regulations, programmes and measures for the protection against and prevention and eradication of political violence and harassment directed against women, allowing the proper punishment and reparation of such acts in administrative, criminal and electoral norms.

62. Subsequently, in 2016, the Committee adopted the Inter-American Model Law on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women in Political Life, in which such violence is defined as "any action, conduct or omission carried out directly or through third parties that, based on gender, causes harm or suffering to a woman or to various women, which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women of their political rights" (art. 3). The model law is intended as a tool for monitoring and curbing such violence and supporting the harmonization of national legislation with the Convention of Belém do Pará. It contains suggested protective guarantees and measures, such as restrictions on the aggressor's access to places the victim frequents; the assignment of bodyguards to women in situations of violence; risk analysis and safety plans; the withdrawal of violent campaigns; and the suspension of the aggressor's candidacy or election or their suspension from public office or employment (art. 37). Under the model law, reparation measures should guarantee the complete satisfaction of the victim's rights and those of their families and

[33] See also Isabel Torres García, *Violence against Women in Politics: Research on Political Parties in Honduras* (NDI, 2017).

communities and the non-repetition of the acts (art. 47). Measures of reparation include: compensation of the victim; immediate restitution to the office from which the victim was forced to resign on grounds of political violence; the determination of security and other measures to ensure the exercise of the position; and the retraction of offences against women victims of violence (art. 48).

63. The Committee of Experts intends to develop operational tools to protect women from violence in politics, including a model protocol for political parties, a guide for electoral courts and a workshop series on identifying violence against women in politics.[34]

64. The President of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), at the expert group meeting held in March 2018, called attention to the role regional mechanisms can play in ensuring that States adhere to agreed principles and standards, even when ratification or implementation of regional treaties is patchy. She said that IACHR had adopted jurisdiction over countries which had not ratified the American Convention on Human Rights by applying the Convention's standards and principles. There was a need to better understand the interaction between free speech and violence against women in politics, an issue IACHR was committed to working on and on which States required guidelines.[35]

65. In Africa, the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol) and the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance together provide the framework for women's empowerment and gender equality, in recognition of the fact that that women's political participation is critical for the development of democracy in the region. The Chair of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights told the expert group meeting about constraints on women's political participation in Africa, including inhibiting electoral systems, poorly enforced quota laws, conservative backlash and harmful traditional practices, and noted the lack of data on violence against women in politics in the region.[36]

66. The Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention), contains no specific provision on violence against women in politics. However, at the expert group meeting, the President of the Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence pointed out that the preamble and several articles in the Convention (arts. 3, 17, 33, 34 and 40) were relevant. It was concluded at the meeting that there was sufficient scope within international normative frameworks to cover violence against women in politics as a form of gender-based violence, although more could be done to issue specific provisions, protocols, guidelines or recommendations to guide States and survivors.[37]

E. Measures adopted and actions taken to address violence against women in politics at the national level

67. States have begun to address violence against women in politics by defining it in legislation and adopting corrective measures to end it. Legislation can be integrated into the broader legal framework addressing violence against women or may consist

[34] Once implemented, the model protocol will include a test to enable judges to more easily identify acts of violence against women in politics. The guide for electoral courts will include the same test and address such violence perpetrated by the State, intersectionality (in particular as it pertains to indigenous women) and freedom of expression.

[35] UN-Women/OHCHR Special Procedures, Expert group meeting report, session 3.

[36] Ibid.

[37] Ibid.

of stand-alone provisions to prevent violence against women in politics. Today, the Plurinational State of Bolivia is the only country in the world with a specific law criminalizing violence against women in politics (Law No. 243 of May 2012 on the harassment of and political violence against women). Elsewhere in Latin America, legislation is at various stages of development in Costa Rica, Ecuador, Honduras, Mexico and Peru.

68. Law No. 243 in the Plurinational State of Bolivia has focused much needed attention on the issue of violence against women in politics in that country and is viewed as pioneering legislation in this field. It is the result of efforts by women active in politics, including the Association of Women Councillors of Bolivia (ACOBOL), which documented incidents of violence against women in politics around the country. The legislation covers not only women elected and appointed to public positions but indeed women exercising any political or public role. It provides for mechanisms of prevention, monitoring and sanctions against individual or collective acts of harassment and political violence against women in order to guarantee the full exercise of their political rights. A national observatory for democratic parity has been set up to monitor gender and intercultural parity and the political rights of women and raise awareness and the visibility of a range of issues relating to women's political participation, including violence and generate data.[38]

69. In addition to legislative reforms, a range of other measures can be taken by different actors to tackle violence against women in politics, including: awareness-raising; data collection; the adoption of codes of conduct (in parliament and other bodies); training and capacity-building and media sensitization.

70. In Burkina Faso, a pre-electoral awareness campaign was implemented to combat all forms of violence in politics, including gender-based violence (A/68/184, para. 51).

71. In Guatemala, in the absence of a specific law on violence against women in politics, the Supreme Electoral Tribunal, during the electoral campaign in 2015, issued Agreement No. 113-2015, by which it fined political parties for engaging in political and electoral propaganda that included sexist practices and the depiction of women as sexual objects, in contravention of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women.

72. In Kenya, violence against women in politics is tackled in several ways. The Elections Act No. 24 of 2011 contains provisions to ensure women's right to vote and facilitate the full and equal participation of women in political activities. Under the Electoral Offences Act of 2016, the use of violence, including sexual violence, during elections is prohibited. In addition, the Commission of Inquiry into Post-Election Violence recommended the establishment, under Kenyan law, of the office of rapporteur on sexual violence with the responsibility to highlight, on a continuous basis, the fact that sexual violence is a serious crime and needs an equally serious response on the part of law enforcement authorities.[39]

73. In 2016, a judicial protocol on violence against women in politics for use at the national level was approved in Mexico by the Federal Elections Tribunal, the authority of which is equal to that of the Constitutional Court and which has a mandate to protect political rights as human rights.[40] The protocol has been applied in more than 20 elections. The Tribunal recently approved a new protocol with strengthened

[38] UN-Women/OHCHR Special Procedures, Expert group meeting report, session 4.

[39] Kenya, Commission of Inquiry into Post-Election Violence (2008).

[40] See http://sitios.te.gob.mx/protocolo_mujeres/.

provisions on reparations and the coordination of authorities. In 2014, observatories were established to monitor and promote women's political participation at the national and local levels.[41] Some of them, including the national observatory, have working groups dedicated to the eradication of violence against women in politics. They disseminate updated information on the issue, promote a culture of reporting and coordinate actions to assist women in politics who fall victim to violence.[42]

74. In Pakistan, the National Commission on the Status of Women began collecting official data on violence against women in politics in 2015.[43]

75. In Tanzania, the Tanzania Women Cross-Party Platform monitored violence against women throughout the electoral process of 2015. Trained monitors were deployed to 14 regions and used targeted questionnaires to interview more than 1,500 respondents. They confirmed the incidence of physical, sexual and, above all, psychological violence against women, including abusive language, verbal harassment and insults aimed at demoralizing women candidates.[44]

76. International organizations have also taken action to prevent violence against women in politics. United Nations entities, including the Department for Political Affairs, UNDP, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and UN-Women have helped Member States to prevent violence against women in politics, including through training and capacity-building. In Madagascar, courses on gender equality, with a focus on the prevention of violence against women and women's political participation, were developed by various stakeholders supported by UNESCO (A/68/184, para. 52). UN-Women also supported national partners in their efforts to collect data on incidents of violence against women in elections and to train police and electoral security forces in Tanzania (2015), Haiti (2017) and Sierra Leone and Zimbabwe (2018).

IV. Conclusion and recommendations

77. **Violence against women in politics constitutes a serious violation of women's human rights and an obstacle to achieving gender equality, having an impact not only on the victims but on society as a whole.**

78. **Women's right to participate in political and public life, including in elections as voters or as candidates for elections, on equal terms with men, is explicitly protected under international human rights law, as enshrined in articles 7 and 8 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, but violence against women in politics is not specifically addressed through stand-alone provisions. Nonetheless, international human rights law on women's human rights and violence against women provides a strong framework for combating and preventing violence against women in politics that should be fully applied at the national level.**

79. **Violence against women in politics, as all forms of gender-based violence, constitutes a violation of human rights and is a form of discrimination against women prohibited under international human rights standards, under which States have due diligence obligations to prevent, investigate and punish acts of**

[41] See http://observatorio.inmujeres.gob.mx.

[42] Mexico, National Electoral Institute, "Convocatoria de presentaciones sobre violencia contra las mujeres en la política (31 May 2018). Available at https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Women/SR/INE.pdf.

[43] See http://www.ncsw.gov.pk/news-events/ncsw-to-launch-standardised-indicators-on-vaw-to-collect-reliable-data-in-pakistan.

[44] UN-Women and UNDP, *Preventing Violence*, p. 59.

violence against women, whether they are perpetrated by State or non-State actors. States, therefore, have a duty to eradicate and prevent acts of violence against women in politics.

80. To do so effectively, it is essential to design, adopt and enforce general laws and policies combating and preventing violence against women, inclusive of political violence, and to guarantee the equal participation of women in political and public life, in compliance with international human rights law that covers all forms of gender-based violence against women and protects their right to equal political participation.

81. Given that violence against women in politics violates the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Maputo Protocol, the Convention of Belém do Pará and the Istanbul Convention, international and regional monitoring mechanisms can play a key role in providing guidance to States on combating and preventing such violence in line with their international and regional human rights commitments.

Recommendations

82. Urgent action needs to be taken, not only by States and their parliaments, but also by non-State actors, such as political parties and other stakeholders, international organizations and independent monitoring mechanisms on violence against women to prevent and combat gender-based violence against women in politics and elections.

83. The Special Rapporteur makes the following recommendations to States:

(a) Adopt and implement legislation prohibiting and criminalizing violence against women in politics or incorporate adequate provisions into existing laws on eliminating violence against women, consistent with international and regional human rights standards. That includes laws to prohibit sexism, harassment and other forms gender-based violence against women in politics, public life and parliament. Laws must be comprehensive enough to cover new forms of violence, including online or ICT-facilitated violence against women;

(b) Build the capacity of all State institutions, including parliaments and election bodies, to guarantee that women can work in security, free from gender-based violence, including sexual harassment, and engage in transparent discussions about the prevention of violence against women, including by conducting surveys on prevalence and creating mechanisms for efficient complaints procedures;

(c) Strengthen the legislative basis for gender parity in all branches and at all levels of government to guarantee women's full participation in political and public life in compliance with international and regional human rights standards, applying, when necessary, temporary special measures, such as quotas and other measures, to accelerate progress towards the equal participation of women in political life;

(d) Strengthen complaint mechanisms and response protocols in line with international and regional standards by, for instance, issuing guidelines, codes of conduct and protocols for institutions like parliaments, electoral management bodies, political parties, electoral courts, legislative chambers or local administrations, and ensure enforcement mechanisms are functional;

(e) Collect and monitor data on violence against women, including on femicide, in politics nationally and analyse each case to design prevention strategies. Data collection and analysis may involve combining data on violence against women in politics with other indicators in national statistical monitoring or establishing dedicated monitoring bodies or observatories for the protection of women's rights;

(f) Establish access to justice mechanisms and reparation measures for women victims of violence in politics, including: compensation for victims; reinstatement for those who are forced to resign from public positions due to violence; adequate security measures to enable women office-holders to exercise their functions; and the formal retraction of offences or defamation levelled against women in politics;

(g) Ensure, in line with the obligation of due diligence and the principle that human rights protected offline are protected online, that regulations on Internet intermediaries are consistent with the international human rights framework and that all forms of ICT-facilitated violence against women in politics are criminalized and prosecuted;

(h) Encourage the media to promote public awareness and actions to mitigate gender-based stereotypes and violence against women in politics, develop media campaigns and increase the visibility of women's empowerment initiatives to tackle violence against women in politics;

(i) Ensure that sentences issued by the judiciary, including electoral justice bodies, on cases of violence against women in politics are made public and include a gender perspective in line with international standards;

(j) Strengthen efforts and build capacity to protect women who belong to categories that are particularly targeted by violence against women in politics;

(k) Train law enforcement officials, including members of the security services and judges, to raise their awareness of violence against women in politics and thereby ensure their ability to apply laws consistent with international human rights standards when investigating complaints and prosecuting perpetrators.

84. As the peak legislative institution of the State, national parliaments are encouraged to:

(a) Adopt new legislation or adapt existing legislation to protect women in politics against violence and use oversight powers to ensure its strict implementation;

(b) Adopt new codes of conduct and reporting mechanisms, or revise existing ones, stating clearly the zero tolerance of parliament for sexual harassment, intimidation and any other form of violence against women in politics;

(c) Conduct surveys and public debates periodically to raise awareness of the issue of violence against women in politics and the crucial role that male parliamentarians can play in preventing violence against women in politics;

(d) Address the impunity of members of parliament with regard to violence against women in politics and examine immunity rules that should not, by any means, protect the perpetrators of such violence.

85. As key interlocutors in the monitoring of the conduct of their members towards violence against women in politics and the gatekeepers to elected office, political parties are encouraged to:

(a) **Address violence against women in politics in the founding documents and codes of conduct of political parties, making public their rejection of any form of violence against women in politics and effectively sanctioning such violence perpetrated by members;**

(b) **Adopt internal regulations, codes of conduct and zero-tolerance policies for perpetrators of any form of violence against women in politics and elections, including sexual harassment and violence perpetrated through media releases and statements;**

(c) **Include male parliamentarians in efforts to prevent and respond to violence against women in politics and elections as advocates and agents of change for gender equality and women's rights.**

86. **As many incidents of violence against women in politics occur during electoral processes, electoral stakeholders are encouraged to:**

(a) **Electoral management bodies: monitor and report violence against women in elections, analyse voter and candidate registration procedures to prevent the erection of barriers to women's participation; ensure that voting arrangements guarantee women's safety in registration centres and polling stations; integrate information about violence against women in politics and elections and respective mitigation measures into training programmes for electoral administrators; and ensure that early warning systems for election violence and electoral security assessment address gender-based forms of violence;**

(b) **National and international election observation missions: include information in mission reports on the number or percentage of women who vote and are elected and quantitative and qualitative data on violence against women in politics and elections throughout electoral processes; and train election observers.**

87. **Given the key role that independent global and regional monitoring mechanisms on violence against women and women's rights can play in combating and preventing violence against women in politics by ensuring that States adhere to international and regional standards, they are encouraged to:**

(a) **Strengthen cooperation to tackle violence against women in politics around the world, based on existing mechanisms for addressing gender-based violence under the international human rights framework;**

(b) **Increase collaboration between special procedures of the Human Rights Council, in particular between the Office of the Special Rapporteur and regional mechanisms, such as through joint missions, and consider developing joint guidelines, public statements and press releases or communications about violence against women in politics at the national level;**

(c) **Strengthen monitoring roles to address the shortcomings of States in eliminating violence against women in politics. In particular, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women should systematically integrate violence against women in politics into its reporting process and guidelines, which are being revised in line with the Sustainable Development Goals, while the Special Rapporteur and other mandate holders should use their communications procedures and those of the human rights treaty bodies, including that provided for under the Optional Protocol to the Convention on**

the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, to address violence against women in politics;[45]

(d) Increase collaboration between special procedures, in particular the Office of the Special Rapporteur, and regional mechanisms, whether through joint missions, public statements and press releases or communications about violence against women in politics at the national level;

(e) Encourage women's human rights organizations and victims of violence against women in politics to file complaints with the Office of the Special Rapporteur, other special procedures and treaty bodies through their respective complaints procedures;

(f) Expand cooperation with election observation and human rights monitoring communities to conduct analysis of violence against women in elections, such as by sharing data-driven findings on violence against women in elections and encouraging formal submissions to the treaty-monitoring bodies and the universal periodic review process, using the communications procedures of human rights mechanisms and sharing reports with special procedures mandate holders;

(g) Cooperate with civil society organizations, such as IPU and NDI, and other stakeholders to prevent and combat violence against women in politics and eliminate gender discrimination.

88. The United Nations system and other international and regional organizations are encouraged to:

(a) Support and complement the efforts of Member States to prevent and combat violence against women in politics, including by developing standards for data collection and supporting monitoring initiatives over the entire election cycle, in cooperation with independent mechanisms on violence against women and women's rights;

(b) Raise awareness of violence against women in politics in United Nations offices and missions in order to ensure the implementation of the provisions of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), which includes the participation of women in transitional political and peace processes.

89. All women in politics, whether at the national or international levels, are encouraged to tackle the culture of silence against gender-based violence and to speak up and report such violence to the appropriate national and international mechanisms, in order to hold the perpetrators accountable and advance system-wide changes on the path to achieving equality between women and men in political and public life and eradicating gender-based violence.[46]

[45] See also OHCHR and the Carter Center, *Human Rights and Election Standards: A Plan of Action* (2017).

[46] The Special Rapporteur joined other United Nations human rights experts to praise the global "Me Too" movement, which has shone the spotlight on sexual violence against women and gender inequality, and paid tribute to those who speak out and demand change, at an event to mark International Women's Day on 6 March 2018. Their joint statement is available at https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=22759&LangID=E.